



THE ARAMIS EDITION

**THE PAGE OF
THE DUKE OF SAVOY**



Scharfenstein seizes Gertrude.

P.D.S.]

Chap. V.

THE WAVERLEY DUMAS

THE PAGE OF
THE DUKE OF SAVOY

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THE PAGE OF THE DUKE OF SAVOY

PART I

CHAPTER I

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN SEEN FROM THE GREAT TOWER
OF HESLIN-FERT ON THE 5TH OF MAY, 1555

LET those of our readers who do not fear a leap of three centuries follow us at once into the midst of the events and personages of our history.

We are at the 5th of May, 1555. Henry the Second reigns over France, Queen Mary over England, and Charles the Fifth over the whole vast extent of Spain, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the Indies.

We find ourselves at the little town of Heslin-Fert, which Emmanuel Philibert, Prince of Piedmont, has just built in the place of Heslin-le-Vieux, which he sacked and destroyed a year ago. We are therefore in that part of old France then called Artois, and now known as the Pas-de-Calais.

We say of old France, for though Artois had been united to the French territory by Philip Augustus in 1180, it had been bestowed by Saint Louis on his brother Robert in 1237, and had formed the dowry of his daughter Marguerite on her marriage with Louis de Male, and with

their daughter it had passed into the hands of the Dukes of Burgundy; and at last, on the death of Charles the Bold, his widow, Marie of Burgundy, carried our poor little province, together with the immense riches and estates left by her husband, to swell the possessions of Maximilian of Austria, where they were lost like a drop of water in the ocean.

Still, it was a great loss for France, for Artois was a fair and fertile province; and thus for three long years Henry the Second and Charles had struggled, with varying fortune, but with unflinching determination—the former to regain, the latter to retain it.

During this desperate war Charles the Fifth had been forced to abandon the siege of Metz in disorder, and had lost Mariembourg, Bouvines, and Dinant; but, on the other hand, he had carried Therouanne and Heslin by assault, and—furious at his defeat at Metz—he had burned one and rased the other to the ground.

In the action before the walls of Metz an army of sixty-five thousand men had been decimated by cold, sickness, and last, but not least, by the troops of the Duke de Guise; and when the survivors took to flight they left behind them ten thousand dead, two thousand tents, and a hundred and twenty pieces of cannon.

The rout had been so complete that the fugitives had not even sought to defend themselves, and when Charles de Bourbon was pursuing one of the flying bodies of Spanish cavalry, their captain turned his horse, and, riding up to the French officer—

“Whether you be a prince, or a simple gentleman,” said he, “if you fight for glory seek some other occasion, for now you are slaughtering men who are not only too feeble to resist, but without strength to escape.”

Charles de Bourbon sheathed his sword, and sounded a recall, and the Spaniards continued their flight without further molestation.

Charles the Fifth had no notion of imitating his rival's generosity, and after the capture of Therouanne, he gave up the town to pillage, and then rased it to the ground, respecting neither churches nor monasteries, and finally called in the peasants of Flanders and Artois to scatter the fragments, lest, by any accident, he might happen to leave one stone standing upon another.

Heslin had met the same fate as Therouanne.

But at this time Emmanuel Philibert had been appointed to the command of the imperial troops in the Low Countries, and, not being able to save Therouanne, he had determined at all events to rebuild Heslin.

A few months of incessant labour had accomplished this, and raised amidst the marshes of Mesnil that town which, a hundred and fifty years later, so greatly excited the admiration of Vauban for the perfection of its fortifications.

The founder had called this new town Heslin-Fert, in memory of its origin; that is to say, he had added to its name the four letters which the Emperor of Germany had given to Amadis of Savoy after his successful defence of Rhodes, and which signified "*Fortitudo ejus Rhodum tenuit*" ("his courage saved Rhodes").

This, moreover, was not the only marvel effected by the young general. Thanks to the rigid discipline which he had established, the unlucky province was beginning to breathe freely after being devastated by four years of incessant war. The strictest orders for the suppression of all pillage and marauding had been issued and enforced every officer offending was placed under arrest, every soldier taken in the fact was hung.

The consequence was, that as hostilities had almost ceased during the winter of 1554 and 1555, the inhabitants had regarded the last four or five months as something like a revival of the golden age.

It must be confessed that every now and then some

farm or château was burned or sacked, either by the French, who held Abbeville, DouLens, and Montreuil-sur-Mer, and who occasionally made incursions into the enemy's country, or else by those incorrigible freebooters, the German mercenaries, who followed the imperial army; but Emmanuel Philibert made such good head against the one, and inflicted such speedy punishment upon the others, that such catastrophes were becoming rarer every day.

This, then, was the state of Artois on the 5th of May, 1555.

And now, after giving our readers some idea of the moral and political state of the country, we must describe its natural aspect, which was very different then from what industry and cultivation have made it since.

Let us, then, imagine ourselves on the top of the great tower of Heslin-Fert, and allow our eyes to range from the northern extremity of the chain of hills which hide Béthune, right along their broken semicircle to the last southern hillocks behind DouLens, and we should perceive that a little way in front of these two villages stands a rustic dwelling, half château, half farm, which bears the name of "The Park," and which seemed like a sentinel placed out in advance of his troop, but who does not altogether fancy the idea of being beyond the protection of his fellow-soldiers.

The high road, like a long golden ribbon, passes in front of The Park, and winds amongst the bright green trees that border the sombre forest, till at length it strikes in two directions, one leading sharply into Heslin, and the other following the margin of the wood, finding its way, not in a very straight line, it must be confessed, to the villages of Trévent, Auxy-le-Château, and Nouvion-eu-Ponthieu.

The plain which extends from these three places to Heslin lies exactly opposite to what we have formerly

been describing; that is to say, it forms the left of the basin of Saint-Pol, and consequently lies on our right as we stand on the great tower of Heslin-Fert.

This plain forms the most interesting part of the view. Not that it has any very remarkable features of its own, but, on the contrary, because a temporary fictitious attraction is lent to it; for, as the opposing plain is carpeted with waving grass, so this one is covered from horizon to horizon by the white tents and floating banners of that great and gallant army which form the pride and glory of its terrible commander, the Emperor Charles the Fifth.

In the centre of this sea of tents, like some stately three-decker among the puny waves, towers the imperial pavilion, from whose corners hang four standards, any one of which might have satisfied the highest human ambition, for the imperial standard is paired with that of Rome, and the blazoned arms of Spain float in proud alliance with those of Lombardy, for the conqueror had been crowned four times.

He had been crowned at Toledo, with the diamond crown which belonged to the King of Spain and of the Indies. He had been crowned at Aix-la-Chapelle with the silver crown of the Emperors of Germany; at Bologna with the golden crown which graced the heads of the Roman monarchs; and, lastly, with the iron crown of Lombardy; and when it was objected that he could not be crowned at Bologna, but that he must go to Rome and Milan, when the Pope refused to allow the golden crown to leave the Vatican, and when they quoted the decree of Charlemagne, declaring that the iron crown should never leave Monza, the haughty conqueror of Francis the First, of Soliman, and Luther, answered that he was not accustomed to go after crowns, but that the crowns must come to him.

And, proudly surmounting these four standards, waved

his own flag, which displayed the pillars of Hercules, not as the confines of the ancient world, but as the gates of the modern, and the ambitious device, "Plus ultra."

Some fifty paces from the emperor's pavilion rises the tent of his Commander-in-Chief Emmanuel Philibert, which is only distinguished from those of the ordinary soldiery by the two standards which adorn it, one of which displays the silver cross of Savoy on its red ground, with the four letters "F. E. R. T.," and the other, Emmanuel's personal arms, a hand raising a trophy of lances, swords, and pistols, with the motto, "Spoliatis arma supersunt"—("The plundered has still his arms").

CHAPTER II

THE ADVENTURERS

ON this all-important 5th of May, a strange group was assembled in a natural cavern, which lay hid in brambles and brushwood in one of the most sombre corners of the forest.

A sentinel was lying on the ground outside, watching with a careful eye every movement which took place in any leaf or blade of grass round the spot, as if fearing the approach of an enemy.

The cave was occupied by eight men, who differed from each other as widely as the north and south, in face, dress, and character, but who appeared, from the arms they carried, to have all adopted the same calling.

One of them, whose face expressed cunning and sharpness, and whose fingers were covered with ink, from his efforts from time to time to free his pen from those hairs which were so plentiful in the ill-made paper of the period,

was writing fast, a large stone making an admirable table ; a second was standing like a statue by the side of the first, and holding a blazing pine torch by way of light, whose red smoky glare lit up, not only the writer and his paper, but also cast fitful bursts of brilliant light upon the torch-bearer and his six companions.

That the writing was some agreement which interested the whole company was sufficiently proved by the eager countenances of almost every one.

Three of the men, however, appeared more engrossed in it than the rest.

The first was an elegant young man, who might be some twenty-five years of age. He was dressed in a beautiful buffalo-hide cuirass, which, if not ball-proof, was at least dagger-proof ; under this he wore a tight-fitting jerkin of claret-coloured velvet, somewhat faded, it is true, but still presentable, and the sleeves were cut *à l'Espagnole*, that is to say, in the very latest fashion, as were also his green velvet breeches, which reached down to his great thigh boots, such as the horsemen of the time delighted in.

The next was a man of about thirty-six, but whose face was so scarred and disfigured that it required a careful scrutiny to ascertain his age at all. One arm and a portion of the chest, which were naked, were not less cut about than his visage. He was engaged in binding up a wound in the biceps, and as the hurt was on the left arm, he was managing the operation, much to his satisfaction, by the aid of his teeth ; he had in his hand some lint steeped in some marvellous unguent of which a gypsy had given him the receipt, and in which he seemed to have the most perfect confidence. As to the pain of his wound, he did not seem to trouble his head about that, more than if the injured member had been made of wood or cast iron.

The third was a tall, thin, ascetic-looking individual of middle age, who was kneeling in a corner telling beads

with a rapidity which would have done credit to the most active monk in the universe.

The three personages who remain have luckily less marked characteristics than those we have already noticed.

One of them was leaning his elbows on the stone which served the writer for a table, and followed the movements of the pen with his eyes, as a spider watches every motion of the fly which is to serve for his dinner. His face was a strange mixture of cunning and common-sense, knavery and good fellowship. He might be about forty, for the thick eyebrows which shaded his deep-set eyes were already turning gray.

Another of our friends was lying at full length on his face, and was sharpening his dagger upon a stone, from which interesting occupation he would start up from time to time, as some particular clause in the all-important document failed to meet his approbation, and exclaiming, "I beg your pardon, but what was that you said?" at the same time suspending his dagger over the offending passage, and when it had been altered to suit his fancy, he would return to the sharpening of that useful instrument.

The last was leaning against the side of the cave, and gazing absently on the light that played and flickered over the gloomy roof. He seemed to be a dreamer and a poet.

Let us now give names to our portraits.

The scribe is called Procopé; he is a Norman, and was educated for a lawyer, and he spiced his conversation with quotations from the laws of Rome and of Charlemagne. No sooner were instructions given him than they were proceeded on. If one trusted to his word, that was pure gold, but there might now and then be some doubt regarding the morality of his method of keeping it.

The individual who held the torch bore the name of Heinrich Scharfenstein. He was one of those worthy disciples of Luther whom Charles the Fifth's persecution of the Huguenots had driven into the French ranks, which he had joined, together with his nephew Frantz, who was keeping watch at the mouth of the cave.

You would have fancied that these two colossi were animated by one mind and spirit. Some people might have fancied that one mind was not enough for two bodies of six feet four each; but if they had seen the Scharfensteins they would have altered their opinion. They rarely condescended to make use of any auxiliary, either in the shape of man, machine, or instrument. Instead of bothering their brains, like our modern wiseacres, as to the means by which Cleopatra transported Pompey's pillar, they surrounded the object to be moved with their four arms, and clasped it with their iron fingers, and making one joint effort with that regularity which distinguished all their movements, the object gradually left its place, and was conveyed to the wished-for locality. If an escalade was in hand, they dispensed with a ladder, which was an incumbrance in success, and must be thrown away in failure, and it was hard indeed if one of the giants, on the other's shoulders, could not get to the top of anything.

As to the young man who was twirling his black moustaches and smoothing his beautiful curls, his name was Yvounet, and he was a native of Paris and a most typical Parisian. Besides the physical advantages which we have already described, he had feet and hands as small and delicate as a girl's. In peace this gentleman is perpetually complaining, and, like the Sybarite of old, he finds the fold of the rose leaf hurt him. He is overwhelmed with laziness if he is wanted to walk, his head turns giddy in going upstairs, and he has a headache if it is necessary to think. But when he smells powder,

and hears the bray of the trumpet, then comes a metamorphosis not mentioned by Ovid: nothing more is heard of laziness, giddiness, headache, *et hoc genus omne*: then the delicate youth becomes a ferocious soldier, cutting and thrusting like a demon, and fighting like a lion with steel claws and a wrought iron backbone.

The one who was binding up his wounded arm was called Malemort, and his sombre and melancholy mind has but one love, one joy, and that is fighting—a love which often defeats its own object; for at the commencement of the combat he immediately throws himself into it with such reckless fury that he pretty soon gets favoured with some good cut or thrust which stretches him on the ground, where he lies groaning, not for the pain of his wound, but because he can no longer continue his favourite amusement. Luckily for him, his flesh has a wonderful power of healing, and he now boasts of five-and-twenty scars.

The skinny individual in the corner, telling his beads, is Lactance. He is a rigid Catholic, and can scarcely endure the presence of the Scharfensteins, whom he suspects of heresy. Being forced by his profession to fight against men and brothers, he puts them out of their pain as soon as possible; indeed, it is quite a pleasure to be killed by him, and he is always compelled to do penance to an indefinite amount for the cruelties he has been guilty of; indeed, if there be any time left after doing penance for those he killed yesterday, he does a little for those he is going to kill to-morrow.

The man with his arms on the table was better off once, but ran through all his property with extraordinary rapidity, and then took up the life of an adventurer. He is no bad hand with the sword and axe, and is as sharp as a needle, besides being a jolly companion to boot; and besides, he can speak the *patois* of every province in

the south of France, and could find his way blindfold through the greater part of it.

Pelletrouse, who is sharpening his dagger, is an out-and-out mercenary; he has served Spaniards, English, and French with equal good-will, but the English bargained too hard, and the Spaniards omitted to pay, so he determined to set up in business for himself and took to the road.

The ninth and last is Fracasso the poet, and, unlike Yvounet, he loves the shade, he loves the night and the twinkling stars, and the reedy margin of the stream, and the hollow murmur of the sea. He follows the army of Henry the Second, although he is an Italian by birth; but every change of scene supplies him with fresh poetic ardour. Often in the middle of a fight Fracasso will stop to gaze on some floating cloud, or admire the tone of the bugle; and under such circumstances an unpoetic Englishman or Fleming will sometimes take occasion to favour him with an inch or two of cold iron. But woe be to the rash individual; Fracasso's poetic inspirations have been destroyed, and he will certainly revenge them.

And now that we have described the company, let us relate the circumstances which brought them together.

CHAPTER III

WHEREIN THE READER BECOMES BETTER ACQUAINTED
WITH THE HEROES OF THE LAST CHAPTER

As soon as the arras gate of the little town of Doulens was opened on the morning of the 5th of May, 1555, four men slipped out and cautiously commenced proceeding along the bank of the Authie; their heavy cloaks might serve them as a protection against the cold morning

wind, or might conceal arms, if necessary. They followed the stream to its source, and from thence branched off to the chain of hillocks which we have before spoken of, and entered the forest of Saint Pol-sur-Fernoise.

There, one of them who appeared more familiar with the locality than his companions took the lead, and very soon arrived at the little cave to which we introduced our readers in the preceding chapter.

He then enforced silence on his companions, and, after carefully examining some branches which seemed newly broken, and some soil which appeared to be freshly disturbed, he laid himself flat on the ground and wriggled into the cave after the manner of a snake.

After a few seconds his voice was heard inside, but its tone had nothing alarming in it; he was addressing the depths of the cavern, and, as they made no answer beyond an echo, he called to his companions that they might enter, which they did not do without considerable difficulty.

"Ah," exclaimed he who had played the part of a guide, breathing more freely, "*Tandem ad terminum camus.*"

"And what on earth may that mean?" remarked one of his companions, in a strong Picard accent.

"It means, my dear Maldent, that we are approaching, or rather we have approached, the end of our journey."

"Bardon me, Monsieur Brogobe," said another, in an equally strong German accent, "but we did not understand, did you, Heinrich?"

"Nor me neither," answered Heinrich.

"And why, in Heaven's name, do you want to understand?" rejoined Procope—for doubtless the reader has understood that it was that eminent lawyer that Frantz Scharfenstein addressed as Brogobe—"Is it not enough if I and Maldent understand?"

"Ya," answered the two Germans philosophically; "dat is all ve vant."

"Then," said Procope, "let us sit down and discuss our plans while we are having lunch."

"Ya, ya," said the Scharfensteins, who perfectly understood this part of the business.

The two giants then drew some wine and a fair proportion of eatables from their wallets, and a repast commenced which did credit to the appetites of our friends.

Maldent was the first to speak. "You said, mon cher, that you would tell us your plans while we were at lunch. My lunch is two-thirds over, and you have not spoken a word."

"Ve be listening," said Frantz, with his mouth full.

"Well."

"Well, then, here it is. *Ecce res judicanda*, as they say in court."

"Be quiet, Scharfenstein," said Maldent.

"Me have not said von vord," said Frantz.

"Nor me neither," said Heinrich.

"I thought I heard something."

"So did I," said Procope.

"I suppose it is a fox whose cover we have disturbed; go on, Procope."

"Well, then, about a quarter of a league from here there is a capital little farm——"

"You promised us a château," cried Maldent.

"Confound it! how particular you are! it is a first-rate farm-house."

"I don't care vedder it's a varm or a jadeau, if it's got de money in it," observed Frantz.

"Bravo, that is what I call sense; but this fellow Maldent is only fit for a special pleader."

"Go on, and don't be all night, Procope."

"Well, then, as I said before, about a quarter of a league from here there is a charming little country-house—call it farm, or château, as you like—which is only inhabited by the mistress, and one male and one female

servant. It is true that the farmer and his people live close by."

"How many of dem is dere?" inquired Heinrich.

"About ten."

"Frantz and me vill take six; eh, Frantz?"

"Ya," was the laconic retort.

"At nightfall we will leave the cave as silently as we entered it, follow an obscure path that I have found out to the bottom of their wall; once there, Heinrich shall mount on Frantz's shoulders, or *vice versa*, get over the wall and open the door for us. The door once open, you understand, Maldent—you see, don't you, Scharfenstein—the door open, we will rush in."

"Not without us, I hope," broke in a sturdy voice some few paces behind the group, and with sufficient suddenness to make even the two giants start.

"Treason!" cried Procope, starting to his feet, and bounding back.

"Treason!" cried Maldent, trying in vain to see into the dark recesses of the cave.

"Dreason!" shouted the two Scharfensteins in a breath drawing their swords and stepping forward.

"Ah, battle, battle! you want to fight," said the same voice; "here, Lactance, Fracasso, Malemort."

A triple shout from the darkness showed that the appeal was answered.

"Stop a minute, Pilettrousse," cried Procope, who had recognised his fourth enemy; "stop, in the devil's name; are we Turks or gypsies, to cut each others' throats in a dark hole in this fashion, without trying to come to an understanding?"

"Let us have a light here; let us know whom we are dealing with, and then, if we cannot come to an agreement, we can fight afterwards."

"Fight first, and agree to what you like afterwards," growled a sepulchral voice in the darkness.

"Silence, Malemort," said Pilletrousse, "I think Procope is right ; come, Lactance, Fracasso, what do you say ?"

"I say," answered Lactance, "that we should accept any proposition which may save the life of a man and a brother."

"It would have been romantic to fight in the obscurity, with this grotto of nature for the tomb of the victims," murmured Fracasso, "but poesy must yield to more material interests. I agree with Pilletrousse."

"But I *will* fight," shrieked Malemort.

"Bind up your arm, and hold your tongue," said Pilletrousse ; "Procope's a lawyer, and he will tell you that three always out-vote one."

Malemort resigned himself to the hard fate of escaping a fresh wound, with a sign of regret.

During this time Lactance had managed to light a pine torch which they had brought with them, and which threw a smoky glare over the party.

At the back of the cavern were grouped Pilletrousse, Malemort, Lactance, and Fracasso, and nearer the mouth stood the two Scharfensteins, Maldent, and Procope.

Pilletrousse remained in advance of his party, and behind him stood Malemort clenching his fists with fury, and behind came Lactance and Fracasso, who were striving in vain to pacify their companion.

The Scharfensteins formed the advanced guard of the opposition party, and Procope broke up the rear.

Our adventurers were no strangers ; they had seen each other on the field of battle fighting against the common enemy, and they respected one another accordingly. Each one felt that his adversaries were not to be trifled with, but on none did this seem to make so profound an impression as on Procope ; he therefore advanced to the front, taking good care, however, to keep sheltered between the Scharfensteins.

"Gentlemen," said he, "we have procured a light by

mutual desire, and now we can appreciate our chances. We are four to four; but inasmuch as my friends on my right and left are on our side, we may well say that we are eight to four."

The immediate consequence of this decidedly imprudent gasconade was a shout of defiance from his four adversaries, and a universal drawing of swords. Procope saw that he was on the wrong tack, and continued—

"But, gentlemen, I do not mean to say that eight to four would by any means insure us the victory, when those four were called Pilletrousse, Malemort, Lactance, and Fracasso."

This oil on the troubled waters seemed to calm all except Malemort.

"Come to the point," said Pilletrousse.

"Agreed," said Procope; "therefore, putting aside the question of chances of victory or defeat, let us look at the affair in a simple and honourable manner. Who conceived the idea last evening of sacking the little château called The Park to-night? I did. Who started this morning from Doulens to put our project into execution? These gentlemen and I. Who came to this cave to make arrangements for the night? Again, these gentlemen and I. Answer this, Pilletrousse, and say if the enterprise does not fairly belong to those who had the first idea, and were the first to execute it? *Dixi.*"

Pilletrousse burst out laughing, and Malemort roared out, "Fight, fight, fight!" in a tone of the most ardent longing.

"What do you find to laugh at, Pilletrousse?" said Procope, solemnly.

"I was laughing," answered Pilletrousse, "at the profound confidence with which you state your rights, and at the conclusions which you draw from your statement of the case, for it happens that those conclusions entirely destroy your claim. I perfectly agree with you that the enterprise

belongs to those who first conceived the idea of it, and were the first to put it into execution."

"There!" said Procope, turning to his companions with a triumphant air.

"Yes, but I have to add that you say you got the idea of sacking The Park yesterday. Very likely; but I thought of it the day before yesterday. You left Douzens this morning to put it into execution; but we left Montreuil-sur-Mer last night with the same object. You arrived here an hour ago; we have been here four hours. You intend attacking the farm to-night, but we expect to take it this evening. We therefore claim the priority, both of idea and execution, and consequently the right to pursue our object without let or hindrance from you;" and, copying Procope's classical termination, "Dixi," said Pilletrousse, with as much solemnity and assurance as the lawyer himself.

"But," answered Procope, somewhat troubled by this reasoning, "what guarantee have we for the truth of all this?"

"My word as a gentleman," answered Pilletrousse.

"I should like something else better."

"My word as a highwayman, then, if that will suit you."

"Hum!" said Procope, imprudently.

Their blood was up, and the doubt cast upon Pilletrousse's word brought it to a point.

"Well, then, fight," cried his three companions in a breath.

"Yes, fight, fight, fight!" screamed Malemort.

"Fight, then, if you will," said Procope.

"Well, fight it out; here goes," cried Maldent, drawing his sword.

"Ya, Bile!" roared the Scharfensteins, whose pronunciation somewhat altered the sense of their war cry.

And as they were all agreed, each man drew his sword

and dagger, and, fixing upon his adversary, prepared with flashing eyes and clenched teeth for the combat.

Suddenly the briars which closed the recess at the mouth of the cave separated, and an elegantly attired young fop, with a black moustache, bounded into the midst of the adversaries with out-stretched arms, crying—

“Put up your arms, comrades; I’ll arrange it to every one’s satisfaction.”

All eyes turned to the unexpected mediator, and all voices cried—

“Yvounet!”

“But where on earth do you start from?” cried Pilletrousse and Procope, in a breath.

“I will tell you directly,” said Yvounet; “but sheath your swords and daggers first; they set my teeth on edge.”

All the adventurers, except Malemort, obeyed.

“Come, my friends, what is this about?” said Yvounet, addressing himself personally to him.

“Oh,” groaned Malemort, “they never will let a poor fellow fight in peace and quietness.”

And he sheathed his sword with a gesture of bitter disappointment.

CHAPTER IV

THE ARTICLES OF PARTNERSHIP

YVOUNET cast his eyes round him, and seeing that if the excitement had not calmed down, the swords and daggers had at least returned to their sheaths, he turned to Procope and Pilletrousse, who, it will be remembered, had both addressed the same question to him.

“Where do I come from?” said he; “I come out of that bramble bush, where I was hidden when the first four

of you came in, and from whence I saw no reason to issue on the arrival of the second detachment."

"And what on earth were you doing here at that time of night? for we got here before daybreak," exclaimed Pilletrousse.

"And so you thought of paying a visit to the little château of The Park?" said Yvounet, without taking any notice of Pilletrousse's question.

"We did and do."

"And you, too, Procope?"

"Certainly," replied the lawyer.

"And you were going to fight over the priority of your conceptions?"

"Most assuredly."

"For shame," said Yvounet; "are you not all comrades and Frenchmen, or at least bearing arms for France?"

"But we could not help it, since these gentlemen would not give up their intentions," said Procope.

"It was the only thing we could do when these gentlemen refused us our rights," said Pilletrousse.

"You could not help it! it was the only thing you could do!" said Yvounet, imitating the voices of the two speakers. "You were absolutely forced to cut one another's throats in the dark; you could not avoid murdering each other. Men were made to help one another, and not to trip one another up; what four of you could only have accomplished with great danger, eight will perform almost without risk; instead of fighting, let us combine, and keep our hatred and our swords for our enemies. And now," added Yvounet, "I had this idea before any of you."

"What!" exclaimed Pilletrousse, "you also had the idea of getting into the château?"

"I not only had it, but I have put it into execution."

"Nonsense!" cried they, all starting.

"Yes," answered Yvounet, grandiloquently, "I had

intelligences within the fortress ; there is a charming little waiting-maid called Gertrude."

Lactance sighed.

"You say you have been in the château?"

"I came from there last night. You know how I dislike being out alone in the dark ; so, rather than go six leagues to Abbeville, or three leagues to Doulens, I preferred coming half a league to this cave, where I remember first to have met my divinity. I went to sleep, intending to propose the affair to the first of you I met to-day ; then in came 'Pilletrousse with his band, then Procope with his, and you fell to quarrelling like so many dogs over a bone. Now I say to you—will you combine instead of fighting? Will you enter by stratagem instead of force? Would you prefer having the doors opened to breaking them in? instead of taking your chance of finding the money and the plate, would you like to have it shown you? if so, give me your hands, for I am your man ; and in spite of the great service I am going to do you, I will only take an equal share of the profits with the rest. Now, if any one has anything better to propose, let him speak."

This speech was received with the most rapturous applause by all except Malemort, who grumbled from his corner, "And there will not be a single bit of fighting in the whole cursed business—disgusting!"

"Come, then," said Yvounet, who had long desired some such association, "let us lose no more time in preparing our deed of partnership ; here are nine of us who fear neither man nor the devil, and luckily amongst us there is a lawyer, who doubtless has pen, ink, and paper, about him."

"By Jove, so I have ! what luck ! as Yvounet says."

"Well, then, make haste, let us prepare our articles of partnership. One of us must be placed outside to see that we are not disturbed."

"I'll go," cried Malemort, "I'll mount guard ; and let

any Spaniards, Germans, or Englishmen I find prowling about, look to themselves."

"No, that is just what we do not want, my friend, inasmuch as we happen to be just half way between the camps of his Majesty and Charles the Fifth; and not being over far from a man who has the sight and hearing of Philibert of Savoy, it is better not to kill anybody we can help, because—however sure one may be of one's blows; one does not always kill one's adversary on the instant, and then people have a stupid trick of shouting, and those shouts would disturb his Highness the Duke of Savoy, whose company we do not desire. No, my dear Malemort, you stop where you are, and let one of the Scharfensteins mount guard; they are Germans, and if needs be, can pass themselves off as lasquenets of the Duc d'Aremberg, or a follower of the Count of Waldeck."

"De Gount Valdbeck vill do de best," said Frantz Scharfenstein.

"The colossus is stuffed with sense," said Yvounet; "yes, my friend, 'de Gount Valdbeck vill do de best,' because the Count of Waldeck is a marauder—that is what you mean."

"Ya, me mean dat."

"Very good," said Yvounet, "then go to your post."

Frantz turned his vast person round, and directed his steps towards the mouth of the cave with his accustomed gravity.

Yvounet then took the torch from Maldent, and giving it to Heinrich, "There, Scharfenstein," said he, "we give you the post of honour; you will light Procope."

And thus Heinrich was transformed into a living candlestick six feet three high.

Procope sat down and drew forth pen, ink, and paper, and commenced the work at which he was engaged when we first introduced him to the reader.

We have pointed out that the task at which Procope

was hard at work from eleven to three o'clock on the all important day of the 5th of May, 1555, was no easy matter to accomplish, for there were as many amendments and divisions as on a bill passing through an English Parliament.

At the moment when Yvounet's watch, (for rare as those articles then were, Yvounet had a watch) showed a quarter past three, Procope laid down his pen with a sign of relief, and looking at the paper with an inexpressible pride and satisfaction said, "That's done—and not so badly done either."

At this announcement all the adventurers, except Frantz, approached the table, but that worthy elephant left his uncle in charge of his interests, and remained outside with the full determination to defend his companions against intrusion, and himself against being captured by any one, but particularly by Philibert the Just.

"Gentlemen," said Procope, looking with evident satisfaction at the circle formed round him, "is every one ready to hear the eighteen clauses of our deed of partnership or incorporation? for in fact we are founding a company."

An affirmative having been given, Procope began—

"We, the undersigned,

"Jean Chrysostome Procope, &c., Honoré Joseph Maldent, Victor Felix Yvounet, Cyrille Nèpomucene Lac-tance, Cæsar-Hannibal Malemort, Martin Pilletrousse, Vittorio Albani Fracasso, and Heinrich and Frantz Schar-fenstein—all officers in the army of his Majesty King Henry the Second."

A murmur of applause ran through the assembly.

"Have agreed as follows——"

The reading of the agreement was here interrupted by a stifled cry outside the cave, which instantly turned the interest of the adventurers into a new channel.

Suddenly the daylight was intercepted by a shapeless

mass, which filled up the mouth of the cave, and then steadily advanced into the centre of the circle, which opened to receive it, and disclosed to the astonished eyes of the associates, Frantz Scharfenstein with a young woman in his arms, over whose mouth he had got his huge paw to serve for a gag.

Every one waited for an explanation, and at last—

“Comrades,” said the giant, “dis is von cursed voman dat vos trying to get into de cave. Vot shall we do vid she?”

The woman, or rather girl, for she was young and pretty, seemed from her costume to belong to the most honourable family of cooks, and she cast her eyes round her in a scared kind of manner, which showed that she found her hosts and her reception somewhat alarming ; but before she had gone right round the circle she suddenly arrested her gaze, with an appearance of intense relief, on the handsome face of the youngest of the adventurers.

“Oh, Yvounet !” cried she, “protect me, defend me, for the love of Heaven.”

And she threw herself trembling into his arms.

“Hallo !” cried he, “mon Dieu, it is Gertrude.”

And holding her in his arms to reassure her—

“Gentlemen,” said he, “we shall have the latest news from The Park now, for my fair friend comes from there.”

Now, as news from The Park was at that moment of paramount importance to our adventurers, they abandoned the reading of the incomplete agreement, and grouped themselves round the two young people, waiting impatiently till Mademoiselle Gertrude's emotion was sufficiently calmed down to allow her to speak.

CHAPTER V

COUNT WALDECK

It was some minutes before Yvounet could pacify Mademoiselle Gertrude sufficiently to enable her to relate the cause of her sudden appearance, and even then the narrative was so broken and so much interrupted by questions on the part of one or other of the adventurers, that, with the reader's permission, we will substitute our own language for that of the young lady, and relate, as truthfully as we can, the tragic events which had driven her from The Park.

That morning, just as Mademoiselle Gertrude had at length reluctantly decided that it really was time to get up, Phillipin, a young fellow of some eighteen years of age, whose father occupied the farm, came rushing in like a scared ox, and, bursting into the room of the lady of the house, announced to her that a troop of some forty to fifty horsemen, who appeared, from their yellow and black shoulder-belts, to belong to the army of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, were approaching the château, and had taken prisoner his father, who was working in the fields.

Phillipin, who had witnessed this performance, and who had fancied from their gestures that they were talking of The Park, had thrown himself on the ground, crawled along till he was out of sight, and then started up and set off for the château as fast as his legs would carry him, and thus gave his mistress time to form her resolution before the arrival of the soldiers.

The chatelaine rose, and easily assured herself of the truth of Phillipin's report. The band was just coming into sight, and appeared to be under the command of three chiefs, one of whom held the end of the cord with which

the unfortunate farmer's hands were tied behind his back, so that there might be no chance of escape.

This, certainly, was not a reassuring sight; but as the three chiefs had coronets surmounting their helmets, and coats of arms engraved upon their breast-plates, and, moreover, as the Duke Emmanuel Philibert had issued the most stringent edicts against all pillage and marauding; and last, but not least, because she had no means of flight, the chatelaine resolved to receive the new comers to the best of her ability, and consequently, to do them the more honour, she left her room, and stood ready on the door step to welcome them.

As to Mademoiselle Gertrude, her alarm was so great, that instead of following her mistress she clung to Phillipin, and besought him, in the most piteous tones, to find her some place where she might hide till the soldiers had taken their departure.

Phillipin thereupon placed her in a dark corner of one of the barns, remarking that it was a place which it was most improbable that the soldiers would trouble themselves about, as there was nothing but water to drink. He then locked the door and put the key in his pocket—which seemed to give her some consolation at being left alone.

Gertrude held her breath to listen more eagerly, and heard a great clanking of arms and neighing of steeds, and the loud voices of the troopers, but finally—as Phillipin had foreseen—all these sounds appeared to concentrate themselves in the château.

The prisoner was dying with curiosity and bursting with impatience, and, had not the door been locked, she would most certainly have run her head into the danger after all, just for the sake of seeing what was going on.

At last a cautious step was heard; a key grated in the lock, the door gently opened, and shut again instantly after having given entrance to Phillipin.

"Well, what are they doing?" exclaimed Gertrude, long before the door was shut.

"Well, Mademoiselle," answered the astonished rustic, "they seem to be gentlemen; but, bless us and save us if ever I saw such gentlemen; if you only just heard them curse and swear you would take them for outlandish pagan cannibals."

"Oh, mon Dieu, how horrid!"

"Yes, but it's true, Mademoiselle; and when the almoner was going to say grace, they told him to hold his tongue or they'd hang him up to the rope of the tower bell, and let their almoner, who is a great whiskered cut-throat, with shoulders like a bull, say grace over him."

"But then, after all, they're not gentlemen."

"Oh yes they are, though; they are the highest German nobility, and they had the impudence to announce their names after behaving in this way—the brutes. The old one, who is called Count Waldeck, must be about fifty, and he commands four thousand troopers in the Emperor's army. The two young ones must be about twenty-five, and twenty. The first is his legitimate son, and the other is a bastard, and it seems to me he likes the bastard best.

The legitimate one is a right-out handsome fellow, with a pale face, and black hair and moustaches, and I think we might make him hear reason; but the other is as red as a ferret, and has got eyes like a wild cat. Oh, Mademoiselle Gertrude, I do believe he's the devil himself, and you should only see how he looks at my lady."

And having wound up with this startling announcement, Phillipin proposed to go and learn more news.

"Oh yes, do go," said Gertrude, "and mind you come back quick, and mind you lock the door, and mind you don't get hurt, and mind—oh dear, oh dear, what will become of me!" exclaimed she, as Phillipin vanished in the middle of this lucid exhortation.

Gertrude sat down meditating on what this horrid

bastard could be like, and was becoming possessed by the strongest desire to see, when the messenger reappeared.

He certainly was not a herald of peace, and did not bring an olive branch by any means ; on the contrary, he brought the news that—by means of threats, and even of violence—Count Waldeck and his sons had forced the Baronne to give up her jewels, her plate, and all the money there was in the château, and then, when she thought that that was a sufficient ransom to buy her liberty from the guests who had come and asked her hospitality, the poor woman had been seized, gagged, tied to her bed-post, and told that if she did not find another two hundred gold crowns within two hours the château would be set on fire, and burned to the ground with her in it.

Mademoiselle Gertrude lamented most piteously over the fate of her mistress ; but, as she had not got two hundred gold crowns to lend her, she was obliged to solace herself by asking what that horrid bastard was doing.

"Oh, mon Dieu, he's getting drunk, and his father is helping him ; the only one who is sober is the young Count Waldeck."

Phillipin left again, and while he was away, Gertrude, with whom curiosity had gradually overcome every other feeling, had come to the determination to see what was going on somehow ; but when he returned for the third time his aspect was so changed that she recoiled in terror.

Phillipin was as pale as a corpse, his words were broken and incoherent, and his eyes wore the haggard expression of one who has just seen some awful and terrible scene.

Gertrude tried to question him, but in vain ; the sight of his horror-stricken countenance seemed to freeze her into stone, and her speech failed her when confronted with Phillipin's dumb terror.

The young man, without explanation, but with the strength of fear and despair, seized her wrist and dragged her towards the garden gate, murmuring to himself—

"Dead—stabbed—murdered!"

Then Gertrude cast her eyes round her; they were close to the skirt of the forest; once in the forest she knew her way to the grotto, and in the grotto she might perhaps find Yvounet.

She felt some compunction about abandoning Phillipin, who had fainted, but she saw some five or six horsemen approaching, who doubtless were some of Count Waldeck's troopers; fear got the better of all else; there was not an instant to lose; she turned round, and mad with terror, her hair flying, her dress torn to shreds by the brambles, she darted like a hunted hare across the open space which separated her from the wood; then at last she drew up and looked back.

The five cavaliers had arrived at the place where she had left Phillipin insensible; they stopped, raised him, but he could not move a step; at last one of them placed Phillipin before him on the saddle, and, followed by his companions, took the road to the camp.

Now, as these men appeared to have the best intentions, Gertrude concluded that nothing very awful would happen to her admirer in their hands.

Reassured as to her companion, she began to look to her own safety, and turned her steps in the direction of the cave, or rather in what she imagined to be the direction, for her flight had so confused her that she forgot the signs by which she was accustomed to recognise the path, and wandered about from one place to another for more than an hour. At the end of this time she accidentally found herself at her destination, and within arm's length of Frantz Scharfenstein.

The rest may be easily imagined; the giant clapped one hand over her mouth, threw the other arm round her waist, and, taking her up as if she had been a feather, entered the cave and deposited the astonished maiden in the midst of the circle of adventurers.

Then, as we have said, she related the circumstances which we have just laid before our readers, and which were received with a general howl of execration directed against Count Waldeck for having pillaged in the morning The Ark, which they had calculated on sacking that evening; and the result of this universal disgust, was the unanimous irrying of a proposition to sally out and see what was going on.

But our adventurers' indignation by no means overcame their prudence; it was therefore decided that Yvounet, who knew every turn in the forest, and was as active as a cat, and as wary as a fox, should go out first and see that the coast was clear.

In about ten minutes he came back.

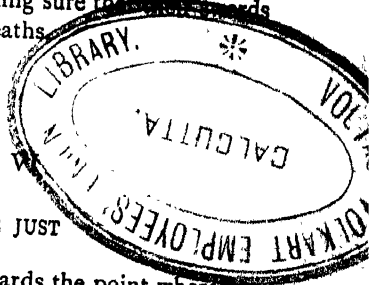
The forest seemed perfectly deserted, and there were no signs of danger. Our adventurers thereupon set out for the margin of the wood, after making sure that their swords and daggers were safe in their sheaths.

CHAPTER IV

PHILIBERT THE JUST

As our adventurers advanced towards the point where the forest threw out the long jutting spur which separated the two plains described in a former chapter, the great trees gradually became scarcer, and finally ceased altogether, and the little troop entered a belt of thick brushwood where the thousands of interlacing stems, bound together by the rich luxuriance of the wild creepers and the low bright foliage, completely hid them as they glided cautiously and noiselessly through it.

In this manner our friends attained the outskirts of the wood, without any living soul having a suspicion of their



presence. At this point they were stopped by the deep ditch, or rather fosse, which separated the forest from the road leading from The Park to the Imperial camp.

The spot was well suited for a halt ; a huge oak, like an advanced guard, stood a pace or two beyond the thicket, and spread its massive branches out into the open country, affording a shelter from whence the adventurers might overlook the whole plain without being seen themselves.

All eyes turned instinctively towards the mighty arms of the tree, and Yvounet, who perfectly understood the meaning of this singular unanimity in the direction of his companions' glances, borrowed Fracasso's note-book, and with the assistance of Frantz he mounted the tree, and the next instant was comfortably perched on one of the upper branches, where he seemed as much at home as a sailor-boy on the mizen top.

Having established himself in this exalted situation, he commenced turning his eyes from north to south, as though his attention were divided between two equally interesting spectacles.

At last, when the impatience of his companions, and of Gertrude in particular, was getting beyond all possibility of restraint, Yvounet tore a leaf from the note-book, and, after writing what appeared to his expectant friends to be an endless amount upon it, he let it fall.

Procopé unfolded the novel billet-doux and read—

"The Park is on fire.

"Count Waldeck with his whole troop is returning along the road towards the camp.

"They are about two hundred paces from where we are.

"Looking the other way there is a small party coming from the camp towards The Park.

"It is composed of seven men, a knight, a squire, a page, and four soldiers.

"As well as I can make out, the knight is Emmanuel Philibert.

“They are about as far on our left as the others are on our right.

“They are coming on at about equal speed, and they must meet exactly opposite us.

“If Phillipin has informed the duke what has taken place at the château, we shall have some fun.

“Look out, boys ; it's the duke himself, and no mistake.”

Yvounet was right. Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, and generalissimo of the Emperor's troops in the low countries, was riding up with his squire on one hand, and his favourite page on the other, and followed by four horsemen, just as though he had been making his ordinary daily patrol.

He might be the easier recognised, as, instead of wearing his helmet, he carried it slung to the pommel of his saddle, as was his ordinary habit, as well in the heat of the mid-day sun as in the wildest winter snow, and, indeed, often in the very height of the battle ; from which singular insensibility to heat, cold, and blows, his soldiers had given him the sobriquet of “iron-headed.”

At the time we write of he had just attained his twenty-seventh year ; and one might have looked far and wide without seeing a finer specimen of manly beauty. He was of middle height, but firmly knit, and as straight as an arrow ; his close-cut hair exposed to view a broad and ample forehead, and his clearly-marked eyebrows shaded dark blue eyes of a piercing brilliancy, rare in eyes of that colour ; his nose was as straight and finely cut as that of a Greek statue, and his glossy moustaches lost themselves in a peaked beard, which formed the envy and admiration of half the young men in the country. The one slight blemish on this exquisite contour was a slight shortness of neck, which is so constantly found in the descendants of those warlike races who have worn the casque for centuries.

When he spoke, his voice had a singular mixture of sweetness and determination, and he could give it the most

terrible and menacing accent, without raising its ordinary low tone, or losing one iota of his perfect self-command.

The squire who rode on his right hand was a young man of the duke's own age, and precisely of the same height, but even more powerfully and strongly built; his clear blue eyes spoke of energy and pride; his hair was almost flaxen, and his thick curly beard and moustache even lighter; his nostrils, which dilated with every movement, like those of the lion, his full red lip, and his sun-burnt skin, glowing with health, all betokened the very acmé of physical power.

He was armed with one of those terrible two-handed swords, three of which Francis the First broke at Martignan, and which, from their length, could only be drawn over the shoulder, and a battle-axe with a blade on one side, a heavy iron mace-head on the other, while a strong triangular spike formed the end of the weapon, which was thus equally serviceable for cutting or thrusting, or for beating down an enemy.

On the left of the duke rode his page, a fair boy of scarce eighteen, whose black hair, which shone with a blue lustre, was worn in the German fashion, as Holbein painted gentlemen, and Raphaël painted angels. His long velvety eyelashes shaded his soft and gentle eyes, whose tint was that exquisite medium, between violet and hazel, which is rarely met with except in Arabs and Sicilians.

The youth's small and exquisitely shaped hand held the rein of his palfrey, which he guided with singular grace and skill, and sat with firmness and ease, though, instead of saddle, its only trapping was a splendid leopard skin, in which the eyes were inserted in enamel, and the teeth and claws were wrought in gold; and, instead of the heavy bridle of the time, he had only a thin silk cord.

His dress was chaste and elegant; for the black velvet tunic was open just far enough to show an under-shirt of cherry-coloured satin slashed with white, and was drawn in

at the waist by a silk cord, to which hung an exquisitely chiselled poignard, whose handle was composed of a single agate. His foot, whose almost babyish smallness seemed better suited to some delicate girl, was clothed in a boot of claret-coloured leather, which reached up to the knee, and hid the fastening of his black velvet hose. His dress was completed by a cap formed of the same black velvet as the rest of his outer dress, and the long cerise plume, which drooped from it, was fastened by a diamond clasp.

Emmanuel Philibert and his companions rode on, neither hastening nor slackening their pace, only on arriving near the turn of the road the duke's face became sad, as if he were expecting the sight of desolation and destruction which would be presented to his eyes as soon as he rounded the turn ; but on arriving at the extremity of the angle the two troops suddenly found themselves face to face, exactly as Yvounet had foreseen ; but, strange to say, it was the larger party that stopped and fell back, with a movement in which astonishment was evidently largely mixed with fear.

Emmanuel, on the contrary, continued riding up to the very spot where Count Waldeck and his sons awaited him, and not a tremble of the hand, not a quiver of the lip, was there to show that anything unusual was taking place ; he was as calm and quiet as ever.

When he was at ten paces' distance he raised his hand, and the squire, the page, and the four soldiers stopped with a military precision.

The duke rode on alone.

When he was within arm's length of the young Count Waldeck, who had placed himself directly in front of his father, the duke stopped.

The three gentlemen raised their hands to their helmets and gave the salute ; but before lowering his, the bastard struck down his visor, so as to be ready for either fortune.

The duke answered their salute by an inclination of his bare head.

Then addressing himself to the young count, with that beautifully sweet voice which made every word harmonious:

"Viscount Waldeck," said he, "you are a brave and loyal gentleman, such as I love to meet, and such as our august emperor Charles the Fifth loves well to reign over, and I have long sought for some employment worthy of you. An occasion has arisen but a quarter of an hour since, of which I hastened to avail myself. I have just received the intelligence that a company of five hundred lances, which I have levied in his Majesty's name on the left bank of the Rhine, is complete, and I appoint you to the command."

"Monseigneur!" stammered the young man, in a tone of astonishment, and reddening with pleasure.

"Here is your brevet, signed by me, and stamped with the seal of the empire," said the duke, drawing a parchment from his breast. "Set out at once, without an instant's delay; we are probably on the eve of resuming the campaign, and I shall have work for you and your men. Go, Viscount Waldeck; go, and show yourself worthy of the favour I have shown you; go, and may Heaven defend you."

The favour was great indeed, and the young man obeyed the order for instant departure. He took an immediate leave of his father and brother, and then, turning towards the duke—

"Monseigneur," said he, "you are rightly called the Just; just both to good and evil, to virtue and to crime. You have had confidence in me, and you shall not be disappointed; adieu, Monseigneur."

And, putting his horse to the gallop, the viscount vanished round the angle of the wood.

Emmanuel Philibert watched him till he was lost to view, and then, turning to Count Waldeck with a stern and altered look—

"And now for you, M. le Count," said he.

"Monseigneur," broke in the count, "let me first thank you for the honour you have conferred on my son."

"The favour which I have shown to your son needs no thanks, for he deserved it; and you heard what he said, 'I am just both to evil and to good, to virtue and to crime'; therefore, give me your sword, Count Waldeck."

The count bowed, and answered in a voice which showed that he did not find it easy to disobey the command which was given him—

"I give up my sword! and why?"

"You know my edict against pillage and marauding, under pain of the lash and the gibbet for the soldiery, and of arrest and imprisonment for the officers. You have disobeyed this edict, by forcing yourself, in spite of the remonstrances of your eldest son, into the *château* of The Park, and stealing the gold and the jewels of its owner. You are a marauder and a plunderer, Count Waldeck, and I demand your sword."

Count Waldeck grew pale; but we have said that it was difficult for a stranger to know the pitch to which the duke's anger had arrived, or the terrible justice which it threatened.

"My sword, monseigneur!" said he; "doubtless I must have committed some other offence; a gentleman does not give up his sword for a paltry affair like this."

And the count attempted to laugh disdainfully, but it only resulted in being uneasy.

"Yes," answered Emmanuel Philibert, "you have committed other offences, about which I was silent, for the honour of the German noblesse; but if you wish me to speak, I will. Listen, then. When you had plundered the gold and jewels, you were not satisfied, and you bound the unlucky mistress of the house to the bed-post, saying to her, 'If within two hours you do not find two hundred gold crowns for your ransom, I shall set fire to the house.' You said this; and as, at the end

of the time, the unlucky woman could not find the money, having given you every farthing she possessed, you actually carried your threat into execution, in spite of the entreaties of your son, the viscount, setting fire to the furthest angle first, to give your victim time to reflect before the flames reached her. You do not deny it; you cannot, for I can see the flames of the blazing château from here. You are an incendiary; give up your sword, Count Waldeck."

The count ground his teeth with rage, for he was beginning to understand the terrible resolution which lay beneath this calm and placid surface.

"Since your information is so correct, you are probably equally well instructed respecting the end of the story?" muttered he.

"You are right, sir; I do know all; but I was silent, for I wished to save you from the gibbet."

"Monseigneur!" exclaimed Waldeck, in a fierce and threatening tone.

"Silence, sir!" replied Emmanuel Philibert, "respect your accuser, and tremble before your judge. Since you wish it, I will finish the story. When the flames were beginning to envelop the château, your bastard son took the keys and entered the room where you had bound its unhappy mistress. The poor woman had not uttered a cry when she saw the flames sweeping round her, for they only brought death, but she shrieked for help when your bastard threw his arms round her, for he came to bring dishonour. Viscount Waldeck heard her cries, and ran to the rescue. He ordered his brother to release his victim; but he, instead of doing so, hurled her, bound as she was, upon the bed, and drew his sword. The viscount instantly unsheathed his own blade, determined to save the unlucky woman, even at the risk of his life. The two brothers fought desperately, for they had long hated each other. It was at this instant that you entered, Count

Waldeck, and, fancying that your sons were fighting for the possession of this woman, 'Stop,' you cried; 'the prettiest woman on earth is not worth one drop of blood from a soldier's veins; lower your arms, you two; I'll reconcile you.'

"At the sound of your voice the two brothers sheathed their swords, and you passed between them. They fixed their eyes on you, wondering what you were going to do. You approached the bed, where the lady of the house was lying bound, and suddenly, before either of your sons could interfere, you drew your dagger and drove it up to the hilt in her breast. Do not think to deny this; your dagger is wet, and your hands are red with innocent blood; you are a murderer. Give me your sword, Count Waldeck."

"It is very easy to say, 'Give me your sword'; but I would have you know, crowned prince—ay, and de-throned prince into the bargain, as you are—that a Waldeck would not give up his sword to you and your seven men if he were alone, much less will he when he has his son at his side and forty troopers at his heels."

"Then," said Philibert, slightly raising his voice, "if you decline to give up your sword, I must take it."

And one bound of his horse brought him face to face with the count.

Waldeck, unable to draw his sword, commenced unbuttoning his holsters, but, while he was still fumbling with them, Emmanuel Philibert, with a movement rapid as thought, and utterly unforeseen either by his friends or his enemies, drew a pistol from his own holster, placed the muzzle quietly against the count's forehead, and drew the trigger.

The powder blackened the face of the haughty free-booter as the ball tore through his brain. He gave one wild shriek, then bent back slowly to the crupper of his horse like a wrestler who is overmatched, lost first one

stirrup, then the other, reeled over to the side, and his lifeless corpse fell to the earth with a dull heavy sound like a lump of clay.

Philibert the Just had been true to his epithet.

During this scene the bastard of Waldeck had stood firm and motionless like an equestrian statue, but on hearing the report of the pistol, and seeing his father fall from his horse, a fierce inarticulate shout of rage hissed through the bars of his closed visor; then, turning to the stupefied and terror-stricken troopers—

“Follow me,” cried he; “this man is none of us. Death to the Savoyard! Vengeance for the count, *a mort! a mort!*”

But the troopers only answered by a dubious shake of the head.

“Confusion seize you,” shouted the young man, utterly beside himself with fury, “do you hear me? Have you not the courage to revenge the man who loved you like children, who fed you with gold, and gorged you with plunder? Do you not dare to revenge your leader and your friend? Well, look on then, cowards and scoundrels that you are, and see me revenge him.”

And, drawing his sword, he dug his spurs into his horse's flanks, and darted towards the duke; but two of his own troopers sprang down and seized the bridle of his horse, while a third threw his arms round him.

The bastard struggled like a madman, and showered curses and imprecations on the heads of those who detained him, but to no purpose; the troopers held him as if in a vice.

The duke's calm face wore a certain expression of pity, for he fully understood and appreciated the fury and despair of a son who sees his father shot before his face.

“What shall we do with this man, your highness?” said one of the troopers.

"Release him," answered the duke; "he has threatened me, and, were I to allow him to be made a prisoner, it might be imagined that I was afraid of him."

The troopers wrested the sword from the hands of the bastard, and let him go.

With a single bound he cleared the space which separated him from Emmanuel Philibert, who stood calmly waiting for him, with the second pistol in his hand.

"Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, and Prince of Piedmont," cried the bastard, stretching his clenched fist towards him, "I tell you that from this day I hate you with a fierce and deadly hatred, and that I will dog you to your dying day; and by Heaven I will revenge my father's death. Look at my face, Emmanuel Philibert," cried he, raising his visor, "look at it and mark it well, for whenever you see it again, misfortune, misery, and death—yes, death to you, Emmanuel Philibert, shall follow in its wake, as sure as I invoke the curse of Heaven upon you now."

Once more the young German struck his spurs into his horse's side, and darted at full gallop down the road; but ere he was hidden by the advancing trees he turned and shook his mailed fist, as if to hurl back a parting malediction on his enemy, and long after he was lost to sight his savage shout of vengeance was heard mingling with the ringing strokes of his horse's hoofs.

"Scoundrel!" cried Emmanuel's squire, darting forward in pursuit.

The duke, however, stopped him, in a tone that admitted of no dispute.

"Not another step, Scianca-Ferro—I forbid it."

Then turning to his page, who was as pale as death, and seemed ready to faint—

"What is it, Leone?" asked he, giving him his hand. "Why, any one who saw you so pale and trembling would say you were a woman."

"Oh, my dearly loved duke, tell me that you are not wounded, or I shall die," murmured the page.

"My child," said Emmanuel, "am I not under the protection of Heaven?"

Then turning to the troopers—

"My friends," said he, pointing to the body of the count, "see that that man has Christian burial, and let this day teach you that my justice is no respecter of persons."

Then making a sign to Scianca-Ferro and Leone to follow him, he once more turned his horse's head towards the camp, and as he rode back his face bore no sign of the terrible scene in which he had just been an actor, except that the lines may perhaps have been a little more strongly marked than usual upon his calm and thoughtful forehead.

CHAPTER VII

HISTORY AND ROMANCE

WHILE the adventurers, after many disappointed glances at the smoking ruins of The Park, are regaining their cave and completing their deed of partnership, which has become useless for the present, but which they think certain to turn to their future profit; while the troopers, in accordance with the Duke of Savoy's recommendation, are digging a grave for their late captain, and while Emmanuel Philibert himself is quietly riding home with Scianca-Ferro on one hand, and Leone on the other, let us dive yet further into the fairy regions of the past, and draw from the romantic history of the times some ideas of the antecedents and position of one or two of the principal actors of our drama.

Emmanuel Philibert, third son of Charles the Third,

surnamed "the Good," and of Beatrice of Portugal, was born at the château of Chambéry on the 8th of July, 1528. He was nephew to Charles the Fifth, through his mother, and cousin to Francis the First, through his aunt Louisa of Savoy, in whose good graces the Constable de Bourbon was said to be firmly established.

So feeble and sickly was he in his youth, that his father destined him for the church, and sent him, at the age of three years, to kiss the feet of Pope Clement the Seventh, who had just crowned his uncle, Charles the Fifth, and who, at the request of that Sovereign, promised the next vacant cardinal's hat to the young prince; thence came the epithet of *Cardinalia*, which he received in his infancy, and which annoyed him to intensity as he grew up.

Let us relate how this name came to be so distasteful to him.

One of the ladies of honour to the Duchess of Savoy, and her most intimate friend, had, only six months previously, also borne a son, who had come into the world as strong and vigorous as Philibert was sickly and delicate. Then the duchess said to her friend, "My dear Lucrezia, I hand over my dear son to your care; take him to your breast, and afford him the nourishment which I may never give him; take him and save him, dear, and I shall owe you more than he will, for he will only owe his own life, while you will give me the life of my child."

Lucrezia adopted the child of her sovereign, and treated him as her own; but yet, her little Rinaldo grew and strengthened every day, while the royal infant seemed to waste and pine.

One would have said that Rinaldo either honoured the rank or pitied the weakness of his foster-brother, so entirely did the sturdy, vigorous baby yield to its companion.

The children grew up together on Lucrezia's knee; but at three years old Rinaldo seemed five, while Emmanuel Philibert at the same age could scarcely walk, and could

only lift his head from its drooping position with a painful exertion.

It was at this time that he was sent on his journey to Rome, and that Clement the Seventh promised him a cardinal's hat.

It seemed as if this promise brought him blessings, and as if the name of Cardinalia placed him under the protection of Heaven; for from this time his health improved, his limbs began to fill out, and his whole system to strengthen and flourish.

But even his present progress was slow and contemptible when compared with that of Rinaldo. However stout were his toys they were instantly broken by him; and even when a set of steel playthings were made for him, they were broken nearly as quickly; thus it came that Charles the Good, who loved to watch the children at play, nick-named Emmanuel's companion Scianca-Ferro, which, in the Piedmontese *patois*, means the Iron Breaker, and the name stuck to him ever after.

It was, however, remarkable that Scianca-Ferro never seemed to make use of his great strength, except for the purpose of protecting Emmanuel, whom he adored, instead of being jealous of him, as most children would have been.

The young Emmanuel coveted his companion's strength and vigour most enormously, and would willingly have exchanged his own epithet of Cardinalia for that of Scianca-Ferro; and really the prince seemed to catch some of the abundant health and power with which his foster-brother was overflowing. In this instance physical force was certainly infectious. Scianca-Ferro tried his strength against him; he ran, he wrestled, he swam with him; and occasionally—for fear of disheartening him by always beating him—would let himself be thrown in the struggle, or passed in the race.

All their pastimes were enjoyed together, and Scianca-Ferro was the best in everything; but those who watched

the two boys saw that Emmanuel was strengthening every day, and would finally press hard upon him.

One day, when the court of Charles the Third was held at Verceil, on account of the disturbances which had broken out at Milan, the two young men had sallied out with their riding-master, and had followed the left bank of the Sesia as far as Novare, and then pushed on to Tessin, which was a somewhat adventurous thing to do in the unsettled state of the country. Emmanuel was slightly in advance, when suddenly a bull, which was grazing in a neighbouring field, charged straight at the prince, bellowing furiously. The spirited horse on which the young man was mounted was so frightened by the sudden apparition that he became utterly ungovernable, and darted away across the plain with headlong fury, clearing hedges, ditches, and watercourses, in its frantic speed.

There was little to fear, for Emmanuel was a first-rate rider; still, this was not sufficient for Scianca-Ferro, who put his own horse to its utmost speed, and gave chase, following the same route, and leaping all obstacles, in the same manner as his companion.

The riding-master, however, took the road, which, after winding about to all points of the compass, would probably lead him to the same point that the young men would arrive at in a somewhat more direct manner.

After a quarter of an hour's frantic pursuit, Scianca-Ferro had entirely lost sight of Emmanuel, and, fearing lest some accident might have happened to him, he began to shout. For some time he got no answer, but at last he heard Emmanuel's voice in the direction of Oleggio, and, turning his horse toward the sound, he finally found his friend by the bank of the stream.

At his feet was lying the lifeless corpse of a woman, who appeared to have perished from hunger, misery, and fatigue, and in his arms was a little boy, of some four or five years of age, who appeared to be dying also.

The village was only a mile off, and therefore Scianca-Ferro set out for it at full gallop. Emmanuel would have gone himself, but the child, who seemed to see a saviour in him, clung to him, and cried most piteously when he attempted to depart.

The little fellow led him to the corpse of the dead woman, and looking up in his face with his appealing, dying eyes, kept beseeching him in a plaintive, earnest voice—

“Wake mamma—do wake mamma!”

Poor Emmanuel could do nothing; almost a child himself, it was the first time he had seen death—he had nothing but tears to give, and he gave these.

Scianca-Ferro returned at last, bearing bread and wine; they knelt down beside the corpse and poured wine into the open mouth, but the spirit had fled, and they wasted their efforts upon lifeless clay.

They now turned to the son; and he, though still crying because his mother would not wake, eat and drank in a way that sufficiently showed hunger and thirst, and seemed somewhat revived.

At this moment the peasants from the village came up, bringing with them the riding-master, who had been frightened out of his life at the loss of his pupils.

The country people now knew that it was the Prince of Savoy that they had to deal with; and, as Charles the Third was adored by his subjects, they offered to do everything for the unlucky orphan which Emmanuel might be pleased to command.

Emmanuel chose a woman who seemed to him kind and sympathising, and, giving her all the money which he and Scianca-Ferro had about them, begged her to attend to the burial of the mother and the wants of the child.

As it was getting late, the riding-master now insisted on his charges returning to Verceil. The little orphan cried, and could hardly be induced to leave Emmanuel, whose

name he knew, but whose title he did not understand ; the latter, however, promised to return on the following day, which somewhat calmed his childish grief.

Although the riding-master pressed forward on their road home, they did not reach the château till late in the evening, and Emmanuel, in that sweet low voice which was now rendered even sweeter by the melancholy story which he had to relate, immediately told the events of the day, and the impression it had made upon him, to the duchess, who praised her son fondly, and promised that the day after the funeral she would herself go and visit the child.

Agreeably to this resolution, the duchess and the two young men set out for the village of Oleggio on the second day following the adventure. On arriving near the place, Emmanuel could no longer contain his impatience, and, striking his spurs into his horse's side, he set off at full speed.

Great was the joy of the poor little orphan on seeing his friend return.

He was presented by Emmanuel to the duchess, who instantly asked a question which he had forgotten, which was the child's name.

The boy answered that he was called Leone, and that his mother's name was Leona ; he said, however, that he did not remember anything more, and to all the questions that he was asked, only answered by repeating over and over again, " I don't know ; I don't know."

And yet, strangely enough, it seemed to every one as if the ignorance was only pretended, and as if the child really knew some secret which nothing could induce him to divulge ; doubtless the mother must have given some dying command to the boy, for nothing less would have sufficed to make such an impression on the mind of a child only four years old.

The duchess scrutinised the boy with true feminine curiosity, and noticed that, although his clothes were coarse

and common, yet his white and delicate hands showed the care of an elegant and refined mother, and his language was elegant and even aristocratic, and, young as he was, he seemed to speak French and Italian with equal ease.

The duchess had the mother's clothes brought to her, but they were the clothes of a peasant.

The villagers, however, who had shrouded her, said that they had never seen a whiter skin or more beautiful and delicate feet and hands.

There was one article of her dress also, which infallibly betrayed the class of society to which the owner had belonged: with her peasant's dress, her cotton shirt, her serge jacket, and her great wooden shoes, she wore silk stockings.

Doubtless she had fled from somewhere in disguise, but in her haste had forgotten to change the stockings, which had betrayed her after her death.

The duchess once more turned her inquiries to the child, but was met by the constant "I don't know;" and so she had no choice but to commit him once more to the charge of the peasants, and recommend them to try and discover round the neighbourhood who the mother had been.

Nothing would satisfy little Leone but following Emmanuel, and the latter was strongly inclined to take the boy home with him, but was satisfied at last by the duchess promising a second visit.

Unluckily, about this time events took place which compelled her to break her word.

For the third time Francis the First proclaimed war against Charles the Fifth, on the score of the much-disputed duchy of Milan, which he claimed through Valentine Visconti, the wife of Louis d'Orleans, who was brother to Charles the Sixth.

In the first war Francis had been victorious at Marignan. In the second he had been routed at Pavia.

One might have thought that after the treaty of Madrid, after the prison of Toledo, and lastly, after his solemnly plighted word, Francis would have renounced all idea of this unlucky duchy, the much-envied possession of which would have made the king of France a subject of the Emperor; but, far from this being the case, Francis was only watching for the first decently plausible excuse to begin again.

The occasion which chance now threw in his way was this:—

Maria Francesco Sforza, son of Ludovic the Moor, as he is popularly called, though in reality his appellation of "il Moro" arose not from any peculiarity of complexion, but from the mulberry tree which formed his coat of arms, reigned as a vassal of the Emperor, who had sold him his duchy for four hundred thousand ducats, payable during the first year of his reign, and five hundred thousand payable during the ten following years, the châteaux of Milan, Como, and Pavia, remaining as security in the hands of the Emperor.

In 1534, Francis the First sent a gentleman whose fortune he had made, as ambassador to the court of the Duke Sforza.

This gentleman was called Francesco Maraviglia.

After becoming rich and powerful at the court of France, it was with joy and pride that Maraviglia returned to his native city surrounded by all the pomp of an embassy.

His wife and daughter—the latter a little child only three years old—accompanied him, but his son Odoard, a boy of about twelve years, remained in Paris, where he occupied a post amongst the pages of Francis the First.

We have no means now of ascertaining why this ambassador was obnoxious to Charles the Fifth, or why he ordered Sforza to get rid of him on the first plausible occasion, but that he did so there can be but little doubt;

and Sforza was by no means slow in executing the command, for Maraviglia's servants having got into some quarrel with some country people, and having unluckily killed two of them in the scuffle, Sforza instantly arrested their master, and sent him prisoner to Milan, which was still in the hands of the Emperor.

It is uncertain what became of Maraviglia; some say he was poisoned, others that he unluckily happened to tumble down an oubliette, of which his jailers had not thought it necessary to warn him. The most likely version of the story is, that he was executed, or rather murdered, in prison. One thing is, however, certain, and that is, that, somehow or other, Maraviglia vanished from the face of the earth, and that his wife and daughter vanished at the same time, and that neither of them were ever heard of afterwards.

Francis the First was not the man to let such an opportunity slip through his fingers. His country had been insulted in the person of his ambassador, and the laws of God and man had been broken and violated by this foul and secret crime, and he determined upon a third Italian expedition.

The moment was favourable, for Charles the Fifth was in Africa, warring against Barbarossa; but in order to accomplish the invasion, it would be necessary to pass through Savoy. It therefore became a matter of vital importance to know whether Charles the Good would side with his nephew or his brother-in-law.

All the probabilities seemed in favour of Savoy becoming the ally of the Empire and the enemy of France.

Francis the First accordingly sent Guillaume Foyet to Turin, with instructions to demand from Charles the Third a passage for the French army across Savoy and Piedmont, and that Montmeillan, Veillane, Chivas, and Verceil should be given up to him as pledges of good faith.

In exchange for this, Francis offered to give Charles

estates in France, and to give the hand of his daughter Marguerite to Philibert's elder brother, Louis.

Charles the Third deputed Purpuret to negotiate with Foyet, and instructed him to grant the passage for the troops, but to meet the second demand with delay, or, if necessary, with absolute refusal.

The discussion between the two politicians was of the very warmest description, and at last Foyet, who was utterly out-reasoned by his opponent, exclaimed:—

"Well, then, it shall be done because the king chooses!"

"I beg your pardon," answered Purpuret, "but I never saw that law in the Piedmontese code."

The conferences hereupon came to an abrupt termination, and consequently, one fine day in February, 1535, when Charles was residing at Verceil, a herald was ushered in, and declared war on the part of King Francis the First.

Charles listened calmly to the terrible message, and when it was over—

"My friend," said he, quietly, "I have always been a friend to the King of France, and I should have thought that the titles of ally, uncle, and neighbour, would have insured a little more consideration at his hands; I have done my best to preserve amicable relations with his majesty, and I am well aware that I am by no means in a condition to cope with him; but yet, as there does not seem to be any possibility of inducing him to listen to reason, and as he seems determined to possess himself of my kingdom, you may tell him that whenever he determines to pay me a visit, he will find me and my friends ready to receive him on the frontiers. My nephew is well acquainted with my motto, 'He whom God protects lacks for nothing.'"

And he sent back the herald with a handsome embroidered suit and a gauntlet full of gold crowns.

After this, there was nothing for it but to prepare for war with all speed; and the first step taken by Charles the Good was to place his wife and child in security at Nice. It was therefore announced that they would leave Verceil immediately.

Emmanuel Philibert now thought it time to proffer a request which he had been meditating on, namely, to be allowed to take Leone from the cottage where he was, and make a companion of him for himself and Scianca-Ferro.

The duchess was, as we have said, a kind and a judicious woman. She had been struck by the delicacy and refinement of the child, and it seemed to her that, at a time when misfortunes appeared to be gathering round their devoted heads, and when the future looked lowering and black, Providence had sent them this young child, which might grow up to be a friend and support; and she gave her willing sanction to Leone's introduction into the family.

Thus Leone became the companion of the Prince of Piedmont.

Emmanuel lost no time in announcing the good tidings to his new friend, and the daybreak found him galloping along the road to Oleggio.

He found his protégé in tears; the poor child had heard that his rich and powerful protectors were in their turn visited by misfortune and distress; he had heard that they were about to leave for Nice, and he wept as if he had once more lost his mother.

When Emmanuel told him that he was to come and live with him, his joy was beyond all bounds. The sunshine soon succeeds the showers in the April of our life.

Two hours later, Scianca-Ferro arrived with the duchess's own palfrey for Leone and after handsomely rewarding the peasants, they set him on the horse and rode back, leading it by the bridle.

Scianca-Ferro, instead of being jealous of this new friend, was as joyous as a bird ; they soon arrived at Verceil, whence they set out for Nice on the following day.

CHAPTER VIII

SQUIRE AND PAGE

Do not imagine, reader, that we are going to describe the desperate wars by which the rival monarchs desolated Italy, during the commencement of the sixteenth century. Our task is much more humble, but at the same time more picturesque, and we shall but glance at the great events of the period.

Francis the First hurried through Savoy and Piedmont, and overspread Italy with his troops.

For three long years the rival cannon of France and of the Empire had thundered throughout Provence and Milan.

And yet, while this reckless waste of life and treasure was going on around them, the three children grew and strengthened under the clear blue sky of Nice, with its cloudless days and its brilliant nights.

Leone had become an indispensable member of the family; he joined in all the boys' games and exercises, except those martial exercises, which were too rough for his delicate hands and arms. He was three years younger than his companions, but at first sight there seemed to be ten years' difference between them ; for Emmanuel had now taken to growing, in a way that seemed as if he had determined to overtake Scianca-Ferro.

Emmanuel's two companions appeared to fall into their positions naturally ; Scianca-Ferro became his squire : Leone was content with the more humble office of page.

While things were going on in this quiet way, the news

came that Emmanuel's elder brother had died suddenly at Madrid.

This was a great trial for the duke and duchess, but they were consoled—if parents can be consoled—for the death of a child. Louis had been away from home for many years, and Emmanuel, who was the darling of his father and mother, flourished like a lily, and strengthened like an oak.

Misfortune, however, was not to stop here; the duchess was taken ill of a lingering disease, and, in spite of all that science could do, and in spite of all the care and attention of her husband and son, and indeed, of every one round her, she died on the 8th of January, 1538.

The duke was inconsolable, and Emmanuel was almost in despair; but luckily he had a companion who had known grief, and who shared his sorrow with him.

Time, however, calms down the wildest sorrow, and the great events of the day at last claimed the attention of the duke and prince.

A congress had just been decided on, to take place at Nice, between Pope Paul the Third (Alexandre Farnèse), Francis the First, and Charles the Fifth. The points under discussion were to be the expulsion of the Turks from Europe the creation of a duchy for Louis Farnèse, and the restoration of his estates to the Duke of Savoy.

Nice had been chosen by the Pope and Charles the Fifth, in hopes that the hospitality shown him by his uncle would induce Francis the First to make concession.

Charles the Good, however, feared that instead of giving back what they had taken before, his holiness and their majesties would prefer to take what was left; but he was obliged to satisfy himself with shutting his son up in the citadel which commands Nice, and giving orders to the governor not to open the gates to any body of men whatever, whether they demanded admittance in the name of the King, the Pope, or the Emperor.

He then went himself to meet Paul the Third, who was to arrive before either of the others.

When the Pope was about a league from Nice, a letter arrived from the Duke, ordering the governor to prepare apartments in the citadel for the Pope.

This letter was brought by the captain of his holiness's guard, who demanded that he and his two hundred men should be admitted into the citadel, in order to attend upon the pontiff.

Here was an awkward predicament; the letter spoke of the Pope, but not of the captain and his two hundred men, and the very thing that the Pope demanded, was exactly what he was forbidden to grant.

The governor called a council, at which Emmanuel Philibert assisted, although he was only eleven years of age; but it was thought that his presence would raise the courage of his defenders.

While the deliberations were going on, the child noticed a wooden model of the disputed citadel, hanging upon the wall.

"On my honour, gentlemen," said he to the councillors, who had been deliberating for upwards of an hour, without advancing a point—"on my honour, gentlemen, here is an easy way out of the fix; since we have got a stone citadel and a wooden citadel, let us give the wooden one to the Pope, and keep the stone one for ourselves."

"Gentlemen," said the governor, "this child shows us our duty. The Pope may have the wooden citadel, if he likes, but I swear to Heaven, that while I live he shall never have the stone one."

The two speeches were reported to the Pope, who said no more about coming inside the citadel, and took up his abode in the convent of the Cordeliers.

The Emperor and the King of France now arrived, and pitched their tents on the opposite side of the town, and the congress began.

Unluckily the results were not exactly what had been expected.

The Emperor claimed Savoy and Piedmont for his brother-in-law.

Francis the First claimed the Duchy of Milan for the Duc d'Orleans.

Finally, the Pope, who was looking out for a settlement for *his* son, demanded that a prince who was no relation either to Francis or Charles should be Duke of Milan, on condition of paying tribute to the former, and receiving the crown from the latter.

In fact, every one wanted something impossible, and in direct opposition to both the others.

Thus, as no one would give way, they agreed on a truce, which was equally needed by all parties.

Francis the First, to renovate his half-wasted army, and his totally wasted treasury ; Charles, to revenge himself upon the Turks for their incursions on Sicily and Naples ; and Paul the Third, to establish his son firmly in Parma and Placentia, if he could not get Milan for him.

A ten years' truce was agreed upon, the date being fixed by Francis the First.

"Ten years or nothing," said he, peremptorily ; and ten years were given.

Nevertheless, it was Francis who broke the truce at the end of the fourth year.

Charles the Third saw these conferences break up, without any one appropriating his estates, with the most supreme delight, and he found himself left in exactly the same position in which they had found him, except that he was so much the poorer for the cost of their entertainment.

The Pope was the only person who had got any good out of the business : he had settled two marriages.

Charles the Fifth, having now got rid of Francis, set

to work against the Turks ; and his preparations for the campaign were so gigantic that they lasted two years.

At the end of this time, just as the fleet was about to set sail, Charles the Good determined to go and present Emmanuel Philibert, who was now just thirteen, to the emperor, and, as a matter of course, Scianca-Ferro and Leone went with him.

On their arrival, the duke, with his son and retinue, were immediately ushered into the presence of the emperor.

Charles the Fifth embraced his brother-in-law, and wished to embrace his nephew ; but the latter disengaged himself gracefully from the august arms, and kneeling at the feet of the emperor, with his squire on one side and his page on the other, before his father had time to interfere, he earnestly begged the emperor to permit him to attach himself to his fortunes.

The emperor thanked him gravely for that mark of attachment, and promised that if he were in the same mind some years hence, the opportunity would not be wanting. And raising the young prince, he embraced him, and as if to console him for the refusal, he took off his collar of the *toison d'or*, and threw it over the boy's neck.

" Ah, by Jove ! " said Scianca-Ferro, " that's rather better than the cardinal's hat."

CHAPTER IX

LEONE-LEONA

As the emperor had foreseen, hardly had Charles the Good returned to Nice, than he received a message from Francis, proposing to return Savoy to his uncle, on condition of his giving up Piedmont to be annexed to the French crown.

The duke was indignant at such a proposition, and sent the messengers back to his nephew, forbidding them ever to come back again.

What was it that gave Francis the courage to declare war against the emperor for the fourth time? for this demand against Charles of Savoy was tantamount to a declaration of war against Charles of Spain.

It was two new allies he had made, and these were Luther and Soliman, the Huguenots of Germany, and the Saracens of Africa, two somewhat strange allies for the "most Christian king," "the first-born of the church."

It is strange that, during this long struggle between Francis and Charles, it was invariably the "chivalrous monarch," as he was called, who broke his faith, and it was he who, after losing everything but honour at the battle of Pavia, managed to soil that irretrievably, by signing a treaty which he never intended to keep.

This time it was Savoy who was menaced first.

The duke withdrew to Verceil, where he set about mustering the few forces he could still command. Nice in the meantime was left under the guardianship of a hardy Savoyard, called Odinet de Montfort.

Emmanuel Philibert begged his father to allow him to remain at Nice, and there make his first essay in martial life, but Charles the Good thought that the life of his only son was too valuable to be risked in this way, and decidedly refused; but there was not the same objection to be made to Scianca-Ferro, and consequently that stalwart young squire had his desire at last.

The duke and Philibert, with Leone, who remained with them, were scarcely out of sight of Nice in one direction, before a fleet of two hundred sail, partly French and partly Turkish, made its appearance in another, and, casting anchor at Villafranca, disgorged ten thousand Mahometans, led by Khan-Eddin, and twelve thousand Frenchmen, under the command of the Duc d'Enghien.

The siege was indeed terrible; the garrison fiercely disputed every inch of ground, and both gentlemen, soldiers, and peaceable citizens fought like devils. The town was attacked at ten different points, and the Turks and French entered by ten different breaches. The Savoyards defended every street; they poured down shot and missiles from every house; they made desperate stands at every open square; they hurled themselves upon their assailants; but in vain. The fire marched in the steps of the invaders, and when Odinet de Montfort retired to the castle, he left his enemies in possession of a mass of blackened ruins.

The next day a herald summoned the general to surrender, but he shook his head sturdily.

"My friend," said he, "you have addressed yourself to the wrong man; I am called Montfort; my arms are impaled, and my motto is, 'Stand firm!'"

Montfort was as good as his motto; he stood firm till the duke approached from one side with four thousand Piedmontese, and Alphonse d'Avalos from the other with six thousand Spaniards, whom Charles the Fifth had despatched post-haste to the relief of his brother-in-law, and then the Turkish and French armies came to the conclusion that the best thing they could do was to take themselves off; and they decamped accordingly.

Great was the joy, both of the duke and his subjects, on his entry into Nice, ruinous as it was; and happy was the meeting of Philibert and his squire, who had fully supported his name of Scianca-Ferro, and who, when his foster-brother asked him how he had got on, when he had real breast plates and shields to cut at, answered—

"Oh, they are not as tough as the oaks, or as hard as the rocks; I don't think much of them."

The treaty of Cressy, which was signed on the 14th of October, 1544, stipulated that Philippe d'Orleans,

second son of Francis the First, should marry the emperor's daughter in two years' time, and that she should receive Milan and the Pays-Bas as her dowry; while on his side Francis was to renounce all claim to the kingdom of Naples, and to return to the Duke of Savoy all he had taken from him, with the exception of Pignerol and Montmeillorn.

All this was to take place at the time of the marriage.

The three youths were now growing up—Leone having attained his fourteenth year, while Emmanuel was sixteen, and Scianca-Ferro six months his senior.

It was in vain that Emmanuel tried to discover what was passing in the mind of his page; but Leone seemed to grow more sad and thoughtful every day, and the older he grew the less he seemed to take part in his companions' sports. They passed their whole time in mock combats, and trials of strength and skill—Scianca-Ferro being endowed by nature with an extraordinary share of the former attribute, while Emmanuel excelled in the latter; but Leone only stood and looked on, or retired into some corner and read. The only exercise which Leone seemed really to care about was riding; and doubtless he saw in that a method of following Emmanuel, but as his sadness increased he gradually gave up even this.

One thing seemed utterly incomprehensible, and that was, that when he heard anything said about the fact that his companion would some day be a rich and powerful prince, his countenance grew even more melancholy than usual.

One fine day a letter came from the emperor Charles the Fifth proposing a marriage between Emmanuel Philibert and the daughter of king Ferdinand, Charles's brother, when, and to the intense astonishment of the duke and Scianca-Ferro, Leone suddenly burst into tears and rushed from the room.

On another occasion Emmanuel had missed his page for a longer time than usual, and, asking what had become of him, he was told that he had been seen to enter the church, and that he was probably there still.

Emmanuel ran to the church, and, casting his eyes round, he saw Leone on his knees in the most retired corner of the building.

Emmanuel approached almost near enough to touch him, without his being aware of his presence.

Then he made one step in advance, and laid his hand on Leone's shoulder and called him by his name.

Leone trembled, and stared at Emmanuel with a startled air.

"What are you doing in the church at this hour, Leone?" asked the prince, uneasily.

"May Heaven give me strength to carry my project into execution," answered Leone.

"And what is this project? may not I know, dear Leone?"

"You will know before any one else, Emmanuel."

"You promise me, Leone?"

"Yes, monseigneur," answered the young man, with a sad smile.

Emmanuel took his hand, and tried to draw him from the church.

But Leone softly withdrew his hand, as he had been in the habit of doing for some months, and made a sign for the prince to leave him.

"I will come directly," said he; "leave me a few moments more."

There was something so solemn, and at the same time so appealing in the young man's manner, that Emmanuel could not refuse him; he left the church, but waited at the door for him.

Leone trembled when he found him there, but did not seem astonished.

"And shall I know this secret soon?" asked the prince.

"I hope to have strength to tell you, to-morrow, monseigneur," answered the page.

"Where?"

"In this church."

"At what hour?"

"Come at the same time you came to-day."

"And till then, Leone?" asked Emmanuel, in a tone of voice which was almost beseeching.

"Till then I hope that monseigneur will not force me to leave my room; I have need of solitude and reflection."

Emmanuel looked at his page with an indefinable feeling of apprehension; he conducted him to his own room. There Leone wished to kiss the prince's hand, but the latter opened his arms to embrace him; but Leone gently repulsed him, and said, with an accent of inexpressible sadness—

"Till to-morrow, then, monseigneur."

And he withdrew into his own room.

Emmanuel stood immovable, and the grinding of the bolt, as it shot into the staple, seemed to cut into his soul.

He waited with impatience for the morrow.

The morning passed slowly and heavily without seeing Leone, and the hours seemed to linger and loiter on their road. At last the appointed hour arrived, and Emmanuel set out for the chapel with a feeling as if his whole fate was to be decided at it.

The treaty of Cressy, which was signed a year before, and which was to have decided the question of the final restoration or alienation of his estates, had seemed to him to be of far less importance.

He found the young man in exactly the same position as on the previous day. He had evidently been praying, and his face bore an expression of gentle and melancholy resignation. It was evident that the resolution, which he had been forming the day before, was now confirmed.

Emmanuel went joyfully up to him; Leone received him with a sad smile.

"Well?" asked Philibert.

"Well, monseigneur; I have a favour to ask of you."

"What, Leone?"

"You see how delicate and unfit for all bodily exertion I am. You need men like Scianca-Ferro to grace your princely future, not of timid children, like myself, monseigneur."

And, in spite of Leone's struggles, two great tears rolled down his cheeks.

"Monseigneur, I have a singular favour to ask of you; I want to leave you."

Emmanuel started back; he had passed his life with Scianca-Ferro and Leone, and had never contemplated a separation from either of them.

"Leave me!" exclaimed he, in utter astonishment.

Leone hung his head, and did not answer.

"Leave me!" repeated Emmanuel, in an accent of despair; "leave me!—impossible!"

"It must be," answered Leone, in an almost inaudible voice.

Emmanuel clasped his hands over his face as if he were going mad, then he let his arms drop heavily, and stood there silent and inert.

"Leave me!" repeated he, at last; "leave me, who found you dying; who received you as if a special providence had sent you; who have always treated you as a brother—oh, Leone!"

"It is for that very reason, monseigneur; because I owe you so much, and can do nothing to repay it, that I wish to retire and pray for you all my life."

"Pray for me!" repeated Emmanuel with a stupefied air; "pray for me! and where?"

"In some monastery, where a poor orphan will be more in his place than at a brilliant court as yours will one day become."

"My mother, my dear mother! you who loved me so well; what would you say if you heard this?"

"I take Heaven to witness," said Leone, laying his hand solemnly on the prince's arm, "I take Heaven to witness that she would say that I did right."

There was such an accent of conviction and solemnity about Leone's manner, as he said this, that Emmanuel was entirely staggered.

"Leone," said he, "do as you will; you are free. I have tried to enslave your heart, but not your body. I only ask you not to decide hastily—take a week——"

"Oh," broke in Leone, bursting into tears, "if I do not go now, when Heaven gives me the strength, I shall never go—and I tell you I *must* go."

"Must go! but why, in Heaven's name, Leone?"

But to this question Leone only opposed that obstinate silence which he had twice before manifested, and Emmanuel was still entreating for an explanation, when he heard the steps of a stranger in the chapel.

It was a servant, who brought word that the duke wished to see his son instantly.

Important despatches had just been received from France.

"You see, dear Leone, I must leave you now," said Emmanuel; "I will see you again this evening, and then, if you are still in the same mind, you shall leave me, if you think it your duty."

Leone did not answer, but sank on his knees and sobbed as if his heart were breaking.

Emmanuel left the church slowly and unwillingly, and turned every instant to look back as he went away.

Leone remained for more than an hour in prayer, and then returned home more calm; his resolution, which had been almost overcome while Emmanuel was there, had now returned, led on by that icy-hearted angel, whom we call Reason.

Once in his room, however, the idea that Philibert might return at any moment to try a last effort disturbed the boy, and every sound seemed to him to be his friend's step

in the corridor. It came at last ; the door opened slowly, and Emmanuel entered with a sad face, in which, however, hope still shone.

"Well," said he, after closing the door, "have you reflected, Leone?"

"Monseigneur, when you left me I had reflected long and deeply."

"And you persist in leaving me?"

Leone could not answer ; he bowed his head in sign of assent.

"And that, forsooth, because I am to be a great prince, and have a grand court?"

Leone once more bowed his head.

"Well, then, reassure yourself," added Emmanuel, bitterly ; "for I am this day poorer, and more unlucky than I have ever been."

Leone raised his head, and Emmanuel saw the astonishment, beaming from his great eyes, through his tears.

"The Duke d'Orleans is dead, so that the treaty of Cressy is nullified," said Emmanuel.

"And—and—" repeated Leone, with eager curiosity marked in every line of his face.

"And," continued Emmanuel, "as my uncle Charles the Fifth will not give up the duchy of Milan to my cousin Francis the First, my cousin Francis the First will not return the provinces he has taken from my father, Charles the Good."

"But," inquired Leone, with intense anxiety, "the marriage with the daughter of King Ferdinand is still to take place?"

"My dear Leone," said the young man, "the emperor wished to marry his niece to the Comte de Presse, the Prince of Piedmont, and the Duke of Savoy, not to poor Philibert Emmanuel, who, of all his possessions, has only Nice, the valley of Aosta, and three or four miserable little parcels of land left to him."

Leone gave a cry of joy, which was evidently irrepressible, but he almost instantly recovered his self-possession.

"It matters not," said he; "it can make no change in my determination."

"And so," said Emmanuel, looking sadder and more cast down at the boy's resolution than he had been at the loss of his provinces; "and so you are still going to leave me, Leone?"

"What was necessary yesterday is equally so to-day, Emmanuel."

"But yesterday I was rich, powerful, and the heir to a ducal crown—to-day I am poor and friendless, and have nothing but my sword; in leaving me yesterday you were only cruel—in leaving me to-day you are thankless and ungrateful. Adieu, Leone."

"Ungrateful!" cried Leone; "oh Heavens, listen to him. / Ungrateful!"

And then, as the young prince was leaving the room, with a stern face and clenched teeth, Leone exclaimed—

"Oh Emmanuel, Emmanuel, for God's sake do not leave me thus, or I shall die!"

Emmanuel turned, and saw his companion standing with his arms stretched towards him, pale, trembling, and ready to faint.

The prince sprang to his young friend, and threw his arms round him, and pressed his lips to his with a blind, unreasoning, unconscious tenderness.

Leone uttered a wild cry of pain, as if a red hot iron had touched him, and then sank back, and fainted.

The clasp of his doublet pressed upon his throat; Emmanuel undid it; he tore open his ruffle to admit the air, and burst off the buttons of his shirt.

But then it was Emmanuel who started back with a cry, not of grief, but of surprise, astonishment, and joy.

Leone was a woman.



UTTERED A WILD CRY OF PAIN, THEN SANK BACK AND FAINTED.
[END]

Leone never recovered from that fainting fit, but from that time forth Emmanuel was the lover of *Leona*.

There was no further question of separation ; everything—sadness, solitude, desire for retirement, all was explained without a word. When Leona discovered her love for Emmanuel Philibert she had wished to leave him, but now that he returned that love, she gave him her life with it.

To the world the page was still a young man, called Leone.

To Emmanuel Philibert, alone, the page was a lovely young girl, called Leona.

As a prince, Emmanuel had lost Brescia, Piedmont, and all Savoy, except Nice, the valley of Aosta, and the town of Verceil.

But, as a man, he had lost nothing, for in Scianca-Ferro and Leona he had left to him the two most precious gifts of divine liberality—devotion and love.

CHAPTER X

THE THREE WARNINGS

LET us now say a few words regarding the political events of the period that passed between the scene we have just related and the time at which our book opens.

Emmanuel had said that he had nothing left but his sword.

The storm which John-Frederick, the Elector of Saxony, had raised by the famous Protestant league of Germany, burst suddenly over the empire, and gave Philibert another opportunity of offering that sword to Charles the Fifth ; this time it was accepted, and Emmanuel Philibert, accompanied as usual by Scianca-Ferro and Leone, set out on the 27th of May, 1545, to join the emperor at Worms.

He was followed by forty gentlemen—the largest army that could be raised in the dominions of the man who still bore the titles of Duke of Savoy, Chablais, and Aosta ; Prince of Piedmont, Achaia, and the Morea ; Count of Geneva, Nice, Asti, Brescia, and Romont ; Baron de Vaud, de Gex, and de Faucigny ; and Lord of Verceil, Beaufort, Bugey, and Fribourg ; Prince and perpetual Vice-gerent of the Holy Empire, Marquis of Italy, and King of Cyprus.

Charles received his nephew most graciously, and gave orders that he should be called “Your Majesty,” even in his presence, on account of his father’s claim to the kingdom of Cyprus, and Emmanuel Philibert repaid it by prodigies of valour at the battles of Ingoldstadt and Muhlberg.

This latter terminated the struggle, and that evening ten out of the forty gentlemen were unable to answer to their chief’s call.

Scianca-Ferro recognised the Elector by his barbed horse, his gigantic size, and the terrible blows which he rained around him, and singled him out as an adversary ; and most assuredly if he had not had his name of Scianca-Ferro before, he would have gained it that day.

With one blow of his terrible battle-axe he broke the right arm of the prince, and with a second he cut clean through his visor, and inflicted such a fearful wound that the prisoner was obliged to name himself to the emperor, his face being nothing but one ghastly bleeding mass.

A month before this, Francis the First, on his death-bed, had told his son that he believed that all the misfortunes of France were a punishment for the alliances with the Turks and Protestants, and that Charles the Fifth had Heaven on his side ; and he charged the future king to live in peace with the emperor.

Thus arose a momentary truce, which Emmanuel took advantage of to pay a visit to his father at Verceil ; and the

extreme tenderness of the interview was perhaps the result of a presentiment that they should never meet again.

The dying recommendation of his father had produced but little impression upon the mind of Henry the Second, who, though devoid of military genius, was passionately fond of war.

The struggle once more burst forth in Italy, and Charles, as usual, united his forces in Flanders; therefore our eyes naturally turned to the north to search for Emmanuel Philibert at the commencement of this work.

We have related how, after the siege of Metz and the taking of Therouanne and Heslin, the emperor had charged his nephew to rebuild the towns, and had appointed him to the supreme command of the army in Flanders, and to the governorship of the low countries.

As if to counterbalance this great honour, an equally great grief struck our hero; the duke, Charles the Good, died on the 17th of September, 1553.

It was in his quality of general, and with the sadness produced by his father's death still imprinted on his face, that we first encountered Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy.

When he returned to his tent after the scene related in the opening of this story, he found a messenger from Charles to say that the emperor wished to see him instantly.

Emmanuel sprang to the ground, flung the bridle to one of his followers, and with a nod to his squire and page to signify that he would soon return, and putting his sword under his arm, he started for the tent of the man who held the world in awe.

The sentry presented arms; and he entered, preceded by the messenger.

The emperor's tent was divided into four compartments, which were respectively, a dining-room, ante-room, bedroom, and study. Each room was ornamented by some trophy of victory.

Merely in passing through the little ante-room, the eagle eye of the general had remarked a man with his hands bound, and guarded by four soldiers. He was dressed as a peasant, but it seemed to Emmanuel that neither his hair nor his skin were in keeping with the costume.

Philibert imagined him to be some French spy, with regard to whom the emperor wished to see him.

Charles the Fifth, who was waiting in the study, was a man of five-and-fifty, who, though short, was powerfully built, and whose eye still sparkled brilliantly from beneath his bushy eyebrows, at all times when he was not in pain.

His hair was already grey, but his short thick beard was still fiery red.

During his forty years' reign, Charles the Fifth had attained as much command over his countenance as any man in Europe; but yet, Emmanuel saw at a glance that something serious was wrong.

Charles turned and received his nephew with marked friendliness of manner.

Emmanuel bowed respectfully.

However urgent the business about which the emperor sent for any one, he invariably commenced the conversation by something relative to his visitor's affairs or interests.

"Well," said he, in Italian, "what news from the camp?"

"Sire," answered Emmanuel, "an event has taken place, the tidings of which would soon reach you, even if I did not bring them myself. In order to preserve your authority, I have been forced to make an example of one who endangered it."

"One who endangered it?" repeated Charles, absently, for he was already plunged in his own thoughts; "and who was that?"

Emmanuel commenced the history of what had passed between Count Waldeck and himself; but it soon became

evident that Charles was listening with his ears only, his thoughts were running on far different subjects.

"Very good," said he, for the third time, as Philibert finished.

There was a short silence before the emperor recommenced the conversation, but at last, turning to his nephew—

"I also have bad news to relate," said he.

"From whence, your Majesty?"

"From Rome."

"Then the Pope has been elected?"

"Yes."

"And he is——?"

"Pierre Caraffa, under the title of Paul the Fourth. He has always been a troublesome man, even at the Court of Spain. Ah!" added Charles, with an expression of fatigue, "the twenty years' strife which I had with his predecessors is about to recommence, and I am almost worn out."

"Time will show, sire," said Philibert.

A noise was heard outside.

"What's the matter now?" exclaimed Charles angrily; "I gave orders that we were not to be disturbed. Go and see what it is, Emmanuel."

The duke raised the curtain, and after speaking to some one in the next compartment, "Sire," said he, "it is a messenger from Spain."

"Let him come in, my child; doubtless he brings news of my mother."

The messenger made his appearance.

"You bring news of my mother, do you not?" said Charles, addressing him in Spanish.

The messenger did not reply, but he handed a letter to the duke.

"Give it me, Emmanuel, give it me; she is well, is she not?"

The messenger still kept silence, and Emmanuel hesitated about giving up the letter, which he had noticed was sealed with black.

Charles also noticed the seal, and trembled when he saw it.

"Ha!" said he, "this is the first misfortune that follows Paul's election. Give it me, my child—give it me."

"Sire," said Emmanuel, giving him the letter, "remember that you are a man."

"Yes," said Charles, "so Diogenes told Alexander;" and he broke the fatal seal with trembling fingers.

It contained but few lines, and yet he read and re-read it over and over again, while tears flowed down the cheeks which war and ambition had hardened to the world.

When he had finished, he handed it to Emmanuel Philibert, and sinking down on his couch:—

"Dead!" murmured he, "dead! and on the 13th of April, the very day of Caraffa's nomination. Ah, my son, I told you that that man would bring me misfortune."

Emmanuel cast his eyes on the letter, and saw that it was from the royal notary of Tordesillas, announcing the death of Charles the Fifth's mother, Jeaune de Castille, better known as *Jeaune la folle*.

At this moment the curtain opened once more, and gave entrance to an officer, whose dusty and travel-worn appearance spoke him the bearer of pressing news.

The face of the emperor was so sad that the groom, who, on account of the importance of the tidings, had, contrary to etiquette, introduced the messenger into Charles's cabinet, stopped him short; but Charles had already seen him.

"Come in," said he in Flemish, "what is it?"

"Your Majesty," said the officer, kneeling, "King Henry the Second of France has taken the field, with his army divided into three bodies: the first under his own command and that of the Constable de Montmorency; the

second under the Marshal de Saint-Andre ; and the third under the Duc de Nevers."

"Well—what else?" asked the emperor.

"The king of France has besieged and taken Marienbourg, and he is now marching upon Bouvine."

"And what day did he lay siege to Marienbourg?"

"On the 13th of April, your Majesty."

"Well," said Charles in French, and turning to Emmanuel, "what do you say to that date?"

"It is a fatal one indeed."

"That will do ; we will not detain you longer," said the emperor to the officer ; then turning to the groom :—

Let that gentleman be cared for as though he were the bearer of good news," said he.

This time Emmanuel did not wait to be questioned ; before even the curtain had closed :—

"At all events," said he, "if we can do nothing to remedy the election of Paul the Fourth, or the death of your dearly loved mother, we can do something to remedy the taking of Marienbourg !"

"What?"

"By Heaven, we can retake it !"

"Yes, you may, Emmanuel, but I cannot."

"Why not, your Majesty?"

Charles the Fifth slid from his sofa and endeavoured to walk, but it was with pain and difficulty that he accomplished a few steps. Then, shaking his head, he turned towards his nephew—

"Look at my legs, Emmanuel, they will no longer support me either on foot or on horseback. Look at my hands, they can no longer clasp a sword ; and the hand that cannot clasp a sword is not fit to sway a sceptre."

"What, sire !" exclaimed Emmanuel in astonishment.

"Yes," answered the emperor, "I have often thought of it, and I think of it more and more every day. Everything warns me that it is time to resign my place to another.

The surprise of Inspruck, where I was obliged to fly half naked—the flight from Metz, where I lost a third of my army and the half of my reputation, and finally, this terrible disease, which no human strength can resist—which seems utterly beyond the help of medicine—this cruel, pitiless disease which seizes upon the whole body from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, which fills the nerves with intolerable pain, which twists the very bones, and seems to freeze the very marrow, and to turn the oil of the joints into sand, this enemy which is more cruel than fire or the sword, and which ruins the very soul itself from mere excess of physical suffering—these all cry, ‘Enough of power, enough of sovereignty; retire into the obscurity of life before reaching that of the tomb. Charles by grace divine, Charles the August, Charles of Germany, Castille and Léon, of Grenada, Aragon and Naples, of Sicily, Majorca and Sardinia, of the Isles and Indies, of the Pacific and Atlantic, make way for another—for another!’”

Emmanuel was about to speak, but the emperor stopped him.

“And then—and then,” repeated he, “there is something else I had to tell you. As if the dissolution of this poor body were too tardy for my enemies, as if defeat, heresy, and the gout were not enough, the poignard of the assassin comes to hasten it.”

“What! the poignard!” cried Emmanuel.

The emperor’s face grew clouded.

“An attempt to assassinate me has been made to-day,” said he.

“An attempt made to-day to assassinate your Majesty!” repeated Emmanuel, with an accent almost of terror.

“Why not?” asked the emperor. “Did you not tell me just now to remember that I was but a man?”

“Ah!” cried Emmanuel, “and who is the villain?”

“Yes,” answered the emperor, “who is the villain? I have the poignard, but not the hand.”

"But," said Emmanuel, "that man whom I saw bound in the antechamber?"

"Yes, he is the villain, as you call him—but the question is, who is he sent by? Is it by the Turk?—I do not believe it—Solyman is a loyal enemy. Henry the Second I do not even suspect. Paul the Fourth has not been long enough Pope; and then, Rome generally prefers poison to the poignard. I am at a loss, and yet I would give much to know. Listen, Emmanuel—this man refuses to speak; take him, lead him to your tent, do what you like with him, but he *must* speak. The more powerful the enemy, and the nearer home, the more important it is to know him."

Then, after an instant's silence, and fixing his eyes on Emmanuel:—

"By the bye," said he, "your cousin, Philip the Second, has arrived at Brussels?"

The change in the conversation was so sudden that Emmanuel started.

He raised his eyes and encountered those of the emperor. This time he shuddered.

"Well?" asked he.

"Well," answered Charles, "I shall be glad to see my son. Might it not be said that he foresaw the exact moment and came to succeed me? I recommend my assassin to you, Emmanuel."

"In an hour your Majesty shall know all you desire."

And with a low reverence to the emperor, Emmanuel withdrew.

CHAPTER XI

As he went out, Emmanuel looked more carefully at the prisoner, and was confirmed in his former idea that he had to deal with a gentleman and not with a peasant.

He beckoned the sergeant to approach him, and said:—

"By the emperor's orders you are to bring that man to my tent."

The duke's tent was not a grand pavilion with four compartments, like that of the emperor, it was an ordinary soldier's tent, divided in the middle by a canvas partition.

Scianca-Ferro was seated by the entrance.

"Stay where you are, but take a weapon of some sort," said Emmanuel.

"What for?" asked the squire.

"In a few minutes a man who has attempted to murder the emperor will be brought here. I am going to examine him alone. Notice him as he enters, and if he tries to break the word, which he will doubtless give me, and escape, stop him, but living—mind, it is important to take him alive."

"Then," answered Scianca-Ferro, "I do not see that I want any weapon at all."

"As you like, only stop him."

"Never fear," answered our Hercules.

On entering the tent Emmanuel found Leona waiting for him.

"Ah, you have come back to me at last, dear!" exclaimed she, starting up. "What a terrible scene we passed through this morning. You might well say that, from my paleness and emotion, I might be taken for a woman."

"Yes, Leona—and yet these scenes are common in a soldier's life; you must try and accustom yourself to them, my love." Then with a smile, "Take an example by Scianca-Ferro," said he.

"How can you say that, even in joke, Emmanuel? Scianca-Ferro is a man; and though he loves you as well as one man can love another, yet my love for you is something sweeter and more tender than friendship."

"My dear love," answered Emmanuel, "I know well that your whole soul is devotion, and therefore I have neither reserve nor secrets from you."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because a great criminal is about to be brought here for me to interrogate, and perhaps the revelations he may make may compromise even crowned heads. Go to the other side of the tent, love; listen if you like; what is only heard by you and me is the same as if I alone heard it."

Leona smiled.

"I should not care to tell any one but you," said she, as she retired behind the partition.

She was just in time; as she left, the sergeant ushered in the prisoner.

Emmanuel was seated in the shadow of the canvas, from whence he might study the face of the assassin without being observed himself.

The prisoner was a man of from thirty to thirty-five, over the middle height, and of so aristocratic a face and bearing that Emmanuel had instantly recognised him as a gentleman in spite of his disguise.

"Leave monsieur alone with me," said the duke.

As the sergeant left, the prisoner fixed his quick piercing eye on Emmanuel, who rose and went straight up to him.

"Monsieur," said the duke, "the soldiers did not understand your rank, and they have bound you. You will give me your word of honour as a gentleman that you will not try to escape, and I will untie your hands."

"I am a peasant, and not a gentleman," answered the assassin, "and therefore I cannot give you my word as a gentleman."

"If you are a peasant, then you will not bind yourself to anything by giving your word as a gentleman. Do so, then, for it is the only pledge I ask of you."

The prisoner made no answer.

"Then," said Emmanuel, "I shall loosen your hands without your word of honour. I am not afraid to be alone with any man on earth, whether he has engaged his word or not." And the duke began to untie his hands.

The stranger bounded back.

"Wait!" cried he. "On the word of a gentleman I engage not to fly."

"Ah!" said Emmanuel with a smile, "one blood horse knows another," and he finished untying the prisoner's hands.

"Now that you are free, let us talk," said Emmanuel.

The prisoner looked sternly at his hands, which were cut by the cords, then letting them drop by his side, "Let us talk," repeated he, with an ironical smile, "and what about?"

"About the motives that prompted you to commit so great a crime," answered Emmanuel.

"I have said nothing about them," said the unknown, "and I have nothing to say."

"You have told nothing to the emperor, whom you wished to kill: that was but natural. You have told nothing to the soldiers who arrested you, but to a gentleman, and one who treats you as his equal, you will tell all."

"What good would it be were I to do so?"

"What good? I will tell you, for I do not look upon you as an assassin hired for money, by some coward who did not dare to strike the blow himself, in order that you may be beheaded like a gentleman, instead of being hung like a thief."

"They threatened to make me speak by torture," said the stranger; "let them try."

"The torture would be a useless cruelty; you would be mutilated but not conquered, you would keep your secret and leave only shame to your persecutors. What I want is a free and open confidence; I want the truth; I am a gentleman, a general, and a prince, and I desire that you should speak to me as you would to your confessor. If you do not think me worthy of your confidence, it is because you yourself are unworthy to speak to me, because you are one of those scoundrels with whom I am unwilling to confound

you, and because the deed which you attempted was prompted by some base passion which you dare not confess, because——”

The prisoner drew himself up proudly, and interrupting Emmanuel—

“I am Odoardo Maraviglia,” said he; “think on the past, and do not insult me.”

At the name of Odoardo Maraviglia, Emmanuel seemed to hear a stifled cry at the farther corner of the tent, but the memories which crowded on his mind left him little time to think of other things, for the name of Maraviglia had been the pretext for the war in which he had been despoiled of his possessions.

“Odoardo Maraviglia! Are you, then, the son of the French ambassador to Milan, Francesco Maraviglia?”

“I am.”

Emmanuel turned his thoughts to his early youth; the name had remained in his memory, but that was all—it brought no history with it.

“Your name,” said the duke, “is that of a gentleman, but it does not awaken any circumstance in my mind which in any way bears upon the crime you have attempted to commit.”

Odoardo smiled scornfully.

“Ask the most august emperor if his memory is as blank as yours,” said he.

“Monsieur,” said Emmanuel, “at the time of the disappearance of the Count Francesco Maraviglia I was only eight years of age; it is not wonderful, therefore, that I am ignorant of the details of an affair which I believe remained a mystery to the whole world.”

“Well, monseigneur, I will explain this mystery. You know that that contemptible prince, the last of the Sforzas, was incessantly vacillating between Francis the First and Charles the Fifth, as fortune favoured one or the other. My father was the French envoy extraordinary to the

court of Sforza. In 1534, while the emperor was in Africa, the Duke of Saxe, an ally of Francis, signed a treaty with the King of the Romans. Clement the Seventh, another ally of the French, had just excommunicated Henry the Eighth of England, and the whole current of events in Italy was against Charles.

"Sforza abandoned the emperor, to whom he still owed four hundred thousand ducats, and placed his fortunes in the hands of the French envoy. It was a great triumph, and Francesco Maraviglia was imprudent enough to boast of it, and his words were carried across the sea, and excited the revenge of the emperor, who was then before Tunis. Unluckily fortune is changeable, and in two months from that date, Clement the Seventh, who was the stronghold of the French in Italy, died, and Tunis fell before the arms of the emperor, who led his victorious army back to Italy. It was necessary to find a scape-goat, and Francesco Maraviglia was selected. It happened that some quarrel arose between the servants of the French envoy and some of the Milanais, in which two of the latter were killed.

"Sforza was only waiting for a pretext to make his peace with the emperor; this gave it him, and my father who for twelve months had been more the master of Milan than the duke himself, was arrested and thrown into prison like a common malefactor. My mother and sister, a child of four years of age, were in Milan with my father; I, being one of the pages of Francis the First, remained in Paris. They dragged my father from my mother's arms without telling them why he was arrested or where they were carrying him. A week passed, during which the countess tried every plan she could devise to discover what had become of her husband, but in vain. They knew Maraviglia to be immensely rich, and feared that his wife might buy his liberty. One night a man knocked at the door of my father's palace, and asked to

speaking to the countess in private. Under the circumstances everything was important; my mother had caused it to be understood that she would give five hundred ducats to any one who would tell her where her husband was, and this man might possibly be the bearer of some tidings.

"The conjecture was right; the man was one of the gaolers of the fortress of Milan, who not only brought tidings of my father, but also a letter from him. My mother paid the man his five hundred ducats when she recognised the handwriting.

"The letter contained the details of the arrest, but did not express any uneasiness. My mother answered, begging him to tell her what to do, and saying that she was ready to devote her life and her fortune to his service.

"Five nights after this the man returned. The situation of the prisoner looked more serious; he had been removed to a different cell, where he was kept in the most perfect secrecy. The gaoler said that his life was in danger.

"Did this man desire to obtain some great sum by working on a wife's fears, or was he speaking the truth?—that was the question. My mother's terror inclined her to believe him, and, although his answers to her questions displayed greed and cupidity, yet they also displayed readiness and apparent truth.

"She gave him the same sum as the former time, and told him at all hazards to devise some mode of escape for the count, and that he should receive five thousand ducats as soon as the plan was arranged, and twenty thousand more as soon as her husband was in safety.

"The gaoler, to whom this was an enormous fortune, went away, promising to do his best. My mother had friends at the court, and she learned through them that the count's position was even worse than the gaoler had represented. They were about to try him as a spy.

"My mother waited impatiently for the arrival of the gaoler, but one thing consoled her. Of what could they

accuse the count?—of the death of the two Milanais? That had only been an encounter between servants and peasants, with which a gentleman and an envoy could not have anything to do. What made her most uneasy was a vague rumour that there would not be any prosecution at all, but that her husband would still be condemned. At last the nocturnal visitor came once more; he had concerted a plan of escape, and came to submit it to the countess.

"The prisoner's cell was next but one to the gaoler's lodge, and the man had the keys of both. He proposed, however, to open a passage through the wall of the outside cell into his own room, exactly behind his bed; they would then enter the outer cell through this opening, remove the count's irons there, and then lead him out into the lodge, where he would find a rope ladder, which would lead down into the moat in the most solitary and obscure part of the walls. Here he would find a carriage waiting to carry him out of the country without an instant's delay.

"The countess approved the plan, but, fearing that they might deceive her husband by telling him that he was free when he really was not she insisted on being present at the flight. The gaoler objected, in consequence of the difficulty of introducing her into the prison; but the countess set this difficulty at rest by showing a permission for herself and her daughter to visit the count; they had not used it, so that it was still available. They would come as evening was closing in, and, when they left, would take advantage of the darkness to slip into the gaoler's lodge instead of going out.

"The duke himself would pay the man, for the carriage would contain one hundred thousand ducats.

"The gaoler was acting in good faith. Before he left the countess he received his five thousand ducats, and pointed out the place where the carriage should wait, under the care of one of her most trustworthy servants.

"The escape was fixed for the day after the morrow.

"But I ask your pardon, monseigneur," said Odoardo, interrupting himself. "I forget that I am speaking to a stranger, for whom these details can have no interest."

"On the contrary, monsieur, they have the deepest interest for me, and I beg you to continue."

Maraviglia continued:—

"The two days passed in the terrible anxiety which always precedes such an event. The countess was consoled by reflecting on the deep interest the gaoler had in the success of the escape. A hundred years of fidelity would not bring him as much as this half hour of treason.

"The hours seemed as if they would never pass, the days seemed endless, and over and over again the countess regretted not having fixed it for the following day instead of the day after.

"The time when she was to go to the prison came at last. Everything necessary for the flight was placed in the carriage, so that it might not be obliged to stop on the road. Relays were ready at Pavia. At eleven o'clock the horses would be harnessed, and at midnight it would be at its station.

"Once out of danger, the fugitive would send word to his wife, who would join him wherever he was.

"The hour struck, and the countess's heart beat fast as she took her little daughter by the hand and went towards the prison.

"On the way a fear struck her that as the order was a week old they would refuse to admit her.

"She was delighted to find that she was introduced into her husband's cell without any difficulty.

"The count's situation had not been exaggerated; there was little doubt of the fate to which he was destined, for the ambassador of Francis the First was manacled like a common felon. The interview would have been sad indeed, were it not to be followed by instant flight.

"During the conversation, all that had not been arranged

was finally settled. The count was determined to risk all upon the chance ; he knew that he had no mercy to expect where he was, for the emperor had made his death a *sine quâ non*."

Emmanuel Philibert started.

"Are you certain of what you say?" asked he. "You are making a terrible accusation against the greatest monarch in the universe!"

"Does your highness wish me to continue or to stop?" asked the prisoner, quietly.

"Continue. But why not answer my question?"

"Because my story will render that answer unnecessary."

"Then let me hear it," answered Emmanuel Philibert.

CHAPTER XII

WHAT TOOK PLACE IN THE FORTRESS OF MILAN ON
THE NIGHT OF THE 14TH OF NOVEMBER, 1534

"A FEW minutes before nine," continued Odoardo, "the gaoler came to inform the countess that it was time to retire. The sentinel was about to be relieved, and it was best that the man who had seen her enter should see her leave. The separation was painful, but in three hours more they would meet again, and soon they would meet to part no more. The child cried piteously on leaving her father, and had to be removed by force. They passed before the sentinel, and then gaoler, wife, and child were lost in the obscurity of the courtyard ; from thence they cautiously gained the lodge without being observed. Once there, the gaoler shut his guests in an inner room, enjoining them to preserve the most perfect silence.

"The three hours passed slowly and wearily away. At last the gaoler returned.

"'Follow!' said he, so softly that the countess understood rather by the expression of his face than by the sound.

"The mother would not leave her child; she wished that her husband might have the opportunity of kissing it as he left; and moreover, there are moments when we cannot separate ourselves from those we love.

"The gaoler drew back the bed, and showed an opening of some two feet square.

"The gaoler entered the first cell, followed by the countess and her daughter, and then drew the bed after him; he then opened the door and entered the count's cell. The count had had a file for the previous hour, but being unskilful at the work, and fearing to alarm the sentinel, he had only got half through the link of his chain. The gaoler now took the file to complete the work, while the count was bidding adieu to his wife and child. Suddenly he stopped, with one hand resting on the file and the other stretched towards the door.

"The count was about to speak.

"'Silence!' said the gaoler; 'something unusual is going on in the fortress.'

"'Good Heavens! what?' asked the terrified countess.

"'Silence!' repeated the man.

"Everybody listened, silent and motionless, as if they had been suddenly frozen into stone. A noise of feet was heard approaching, and the regular tramp betokened that some of the persons at least were soldiers.

"'Come,' said the gaoler, seizing the countess by the arm, 'come—it must be some nocturnal round of inspection by the governor, and you must not be found here. They will not stay long if they come here, and when they are gone we can resume our work.'

"The countess and her daughter did not resist; it would have been foolish to do so, and the count himself pushed them to the door. They went out and the gaoler closed

and locked the door behind them. Your highness will remember my saying that there was a barred opening from the first into the second cell ; thanks to the darkness, the countess could look through this without being seen.

"The mother held her child in her arms, and they pressed their faces against the bars to see what was about to happen.

"Their hopes that the visitors would not enter the count's cell were soon destroyed ; they heard the footsteps stop at the door which led from the cell into the passage, then the grating of a key in the lock ; the door opened, and the countess was on the point of shrieking at the spectacle which presented itself. The gaoler saw what was coming.

"'Not a word, not a cry, not a movement, whatever happens,' said he, 'or I——'

"He stopped for an instant, as if to find a menace which would effectually silence her.

"'Or I will kill your child,' said he, drawing a long pointed knife from his breast.

"'Villain !' murmured she.

"'Oh,' answered the man, 'every one for his own life ; that of a poor gaoler is as valuable in his eyes as a noble countess's is in hers.'

"The lady placed her hand over the child's mouth, to insure silence. As to herself, there was no chance of her uttering a sound after the gaoler's threat.

"But what was the sight which had so nearly caused the countess to betray herself ?

"Firstly, two men clothed in black and bearing torches ; next, a man bearing a parchment roll with a great red seal ; then a man masked, and wearing a long brown cloak which hid his whole figure ; after him, a priest. They entered the cell one by one, and exposed to the eyes of the terrified countess another and even more sinister group remaining in the corridor. Opposite the door a man in a parti-coloured dress of red and black was leaning on a long,

straight, two-handed sword without any sheath; behind him stood six Brothers of Mercy in black masks, supporting an empty coffin, and behind them again shone the muskets of a dozen soldiers.

"The count was leaning against the dark wall of his cell, and his pale face seemed to stand out from it like that of a phantom, while his eager glances, directed towards the grating, crossed those from eyes whose loved presence he divined though he could not see them.

"If there remained any doubt in his mind of the fate to which he was condemned, that doubt was of short endurance. The man holding the parchment scroll advanced, saying:—

"'Count, do you believe that you are at peace with your God?'

"'As much so as a man who has nothing to reproach himself with can be.'

"'That is well, for I come to read you your condemnation to death.'

"'Pronounced by what tribunal?' asked the count scornfully.

"'By the all-powerful justice of the duke.'

"'On whose accusation?'

"'On that of the most august emperor, Charles the Fifth.'

"'Well, I am ready to hear the sentence.'

"'On your knees. It is kneeling that a sentence of death should be heard.'

"'Yes, when the listener is guilty, not when he is innocent.'

"'Count, you are not above the law; on your knees, or we must use force.'

"'Try,' said the count.

"'Let him stand,' said the masked individual. 'Only let him cross himself.'

"The count started at the sound of the voice.

“‘Duke Sforza,’ said he, turning to the speaker, ‘I thank you.’

“‘Oh, if it is the duke, let me implore mercy,’ murmured the countess.

“‘Silence, if you value your child’s life.’

“The countess involuntarily gave a sob, which was heard by the count; he ventured in answer to make a gesture with his hand, which meant courage, then following the duke’s recommendation:—

“‘In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,’ said he, crossing himself.

“‘Amen,’ murmured the priest.

“Then the man with the parchment commenced reading the sentence. It was drawn up in the name of the Duke Francesco Maria Sforza, at the request of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and it condemned Francesco Maraviglia to be executed in his cell at midnight, as a traitor, a spy, and a divulger of state secrets.

“A second sob reached the ear of the count, but his only. He turned his eyes in the direction of the grating:—

“‘Incomprehensible as the sentence is,’ said he, ‘I submit to it without grief and without anger. Yet, as a man who can no longer defend his life, must still defend his honour, I appeal from the sentence of the duke.’

“‘And to whom?’ asked Sforza.

“‘Firstly, to my royal master, Francis the First, and secondly, to the future and to God—to God, who judges all men, and particularly princes, kings, and emperors.’

“‘Is that the only tribunal to which you appeal?’ asked the duke.

“‘Yes; and I summon you to appear before it.’

“‘When?’ asked the duke.

“‘In the same time that Jacques de Molay assigned to his judge—that is, in a year and a day. This is the 15th of November, 1534, and I summon you to appear before the tribunal of the Almighty on the 16th of November, 1535.’

"As he said this, the count stretched out his hand towards the duke with an action of such solemnity and conviction, of such majesty and command, that the duke's face turned white with terror behind his sable mask. For an instant it was the victim who triumphed and the judge who stood in awe.

"*'Bah!'* exclaimed the duke, at last, 'you have a quarter of an hour to pass with your confessor before your execution.'

"Then, turning to the priest:—

"*'My father,'* said he, 'do your office.'

"And he left the cell, followed by the torch-bearers and the man with the parchment; but they left the door wide open behind them, so that they might be able to see everything that took place within the cell, although they had withdrawn out of respect for the confession.

"A last faint sob reached the count's ear through the grating; the unhappy countess had calculated upon the closing of the door as her last gleam of hope; she would have thrown herself at the feet of the confessor and besought him with tears and prayers, the prayers of a wife who begs her husband's life, to assist in the escape of the count. My poor mother's last hope had failed her."

Emmanuel Philibert trembled; he had forgotten that the relater of this fearful scene was no indifferent historian, but a son, describing the death of his father.

"When my father was left alone with the confessor," continued Odoardo, "he addressed him in words which were in reality addressed to his wife, although they seemed intended for the ear of the priest alone.

"My sister alone, if she still live, can tell the agony of my poor mother during this awful scene, where the dark figure of the executioner, leaning on his sword, motionless and pitiless, formed so ghastly a background. Alas! at that moment I was three hundred leagues distant, laughing, and playing, with all the thoughtless gaiety of a boy.

The duke had been standing with his watch in his hand during the whole confession; exactly as the fifteen minutes finished—

“‘Count,’ said he, ‘the time you were allowed is over—the priest has finished his task—the executioner must do his.’

“The confessor gave the count absolution, and retired, exhibiting the cross. As he withdrew, the executioner advanced. The count was still kneeling.

“‘Have you any last request to address to the duke or the emperor?’ asked Sforza.

“‘I make no petition, except to my Maker,’ answered the count.

“‘Then you are ready?’

“‘You see I am on my knees.’

“The count was indeed kneeling, with his face turned towards the grating, and his eyes bidding his wife and child that last adieu, which his mouth dared not utter.

“‘If you do not wish my hand to sully you, be good enough to turn down the collar of your shirt, count,’ said the executioner; ‘I have no right to touch you except with the edge of my sword.’

“The count turned down his collar without speaking.

“‘Recommend yourself to God,’ said the executioner.

“‘Almighty and most merciful Father—into thy hands I commit my soul!’

“As the last words were uttered the torchlight flashed upon the gleaming sword-blade as it whistled through the air, and the floor echoed to the heavy fall of the lifeless corpse, whose head rolled slowly forward and struck the bottom of the grated door, as if by a last impulse of love.

“My poor mother’s stifled cry was thought to be the death rattle of the murdered man.

“I ask your pardon, monseigneur, but if you wish me to finish the history you must give me some water, or I shall faint,” said Odoardo, hoarsely.

Emmanuel, seeing his prisoner tremble and turn pale, sprang to support him, made him sit down on a pile of cushions, and presented him the glass of water with his own hand, and while he did so, his face—which showed no emotion during battle or danger—was almost as pale as that of the man he was assisting.

After five minutes, Odoardo was able to continue his story.

“When my mother recovered her consciousness, the whole scene appeared to have passed like some fearful dream, which she would have disbelieved had she not been lying on the bed in the gaoler’s lodge. So solemn had been the injunctions which she had given my little sister not to speak or cry, that, although the poor child believed she had lost both father and mother, the countess found her staring anxiously but silently in the face of the one parent she could still see, while her eyes were flooded with unrestrainable tears. The gaoler was gone, but his wife had supplied his place, and she, pitying my poor mother, made her put on one of her own dresses, while she disguised my sister in the clothes of her son. At daybreak she conducted them to the road to Novare, gave the countess two ducats, and said adieu, telling her to trust in God.

“My mother seemed pursued and maddened by a terrible vision; she neither returned to her palace for money, nor sought the carriage in which the count was to have escaped; her sole idea was to fly—to reach the frontier, to rush from the cursed and blood-stained territory of the Sforza. She disappeared in the direction of Novare, and has never been heard of since. What may have been the fate of my mother and sister is known to God, but not to me.

“The news of my father’s death soon found its way to Paris. It was the king himself who informed me of it, and as he did so, he assured me of his constant protection, and announced to me his intention of declaring war to avenge my father’s murder.

"I sought and obtained permission to follow the king. At first fortune favoured us. We crossed your father's country, which Francis took possession of; then we arrived at Milan.

"The Duke Sforza had fled to Rome for the protection of Paul the Third.

"Every search was made for information regarding the death of my father, but it was impossible to find any of those who had been present at the murder. The executioner had died suddenly, three days after the deed; the name of the officer who had read the sentence was unknown, so was that of the confessor. The gaoler and his wife had fled.

"Thus, in spite of all my endeavours, I could not even discover the resting-place of my father's body. Twenty years had passed since these fruitless efforts, when I received a letter dated Avignon.

"A man, who only signed by initial, entreated me to come immediately to Avignon, as he had most important information to give me regarding my father's death.

"What this letter offered me was the desire of my life. I set off instantly for Avignon, I found the man—he was the ex-gaoler of the fortress of Milan. On seeing the death of my father, and knowing exactly where the carriage would be waiting, the evil spirit had tempted him; he had left my mother in charge of his wife, slipped down the rope ladder, found the carriage, gone up to the coachman in the name of my father, stabbed him, thrown his body into the moat, seized the reins, and escaped over the frontier with the carriage and its contents.

"Once over the frontier, he had sold the carriage and gone to Avignon, and from thence had written to his wife and child to join him.

"The hand of God, however, was upon this man; his wife died first—then his child; at last he felt that he himself would soon be called to his account. It was then that he sent for me.

"The man related to me, detail by detail, every occurrence of that terrible night, which made so profound an impression upon his mind that he had not forgotten a single particular; but alas! he could give me no information regarding the fate of my poor mother and sister, who doubtless died of hunger and fatigue on the road to Novare.

"I pardoned the dying wretch for the robbery he had committed, but there my forgiveness stopped. The Duke Sforza had died in 1535, exactly a year and a day after my father had summoned him to appear before the throne of God. He had gone to his account before a higher tribunal than that of human justice, and to suffer a vengeance more terrible than that of man.

"There remained the emperor, Charles the Fifth—the emperor at the very summit of power and glory, in all the magnificence and plenitude of royalty; he was unpunished and unchastened, and upon him I was determined to avenge myself.

"And now, monseigneur, I have told you all the truth. I have tried to avenge my father's death by taking the life of the emperor, and I am prepared to lose my own; but I am a gentleman, and I claim a gentleman's death."

Emmanuel Philibert inclined his head in sign of assent.

"Your request shall be granted," said he. "Do you wish to remain unbound until the time of your execution?"

"On what condition will that be granted me?"

"On your word not to attempt to escape."

"I have already given it."

"Repeat it."

"I repeat it, but be speedy. The crime is public, the confession is complete. Let the punishment be without delay."

"It is not for me to fix the time of a man's death," answered Emmanuel; "that rests with the emperor."

Then, calling the sergeant—

"Take this gentleman to a tent; let him be alone. A single sentinel will be sufficient. I have his word as a gentleman," said he.

Emmanuel followed the retreating figure with his eyes until it was out of sight; then, fancying he heard a slight noise, he turned, and saw Leona standing silently at the entrance of the inner compartment, her eyes still wet with the tears which she had doubtless shed over the melancholy story which she had just heard.

"What do you want, dear?" asked the prince.

"I want to tell you," answered Leona, "that that young man must not die."

Emmanuel's face grew sad.

"Do you reflect upon what you are asking, Leona? That man has committed, or tried to commit, a most fearful crime."

"Still," cried the young girl, throwing her arms round Emmanuel's neck, "still, I tell you, he must not die."

"The emperor must decide, dearest, what I must do; and, indeed, all I can do is to report what I have heard to the emperor."

"And I tell you that if the emperor sentences him to death you must obtain his pardon."

"Leona, you give me credit for more influence over the emperor than I have. The imperial justice must take its course: if it condemn——"

"Whether it condemn or not, Odoardo Maraviglia must live. He must, my dear love, he must!"

"And why, Leona?"

"Because he is my brother!"

Emmanuel Philibert started back with a cry of surprise. The mother dying of hunger and fatigue on the banks of the Sezia, the child who so obstinately guarded the secret of its birth and sex—all, all were explained by those few words—"He is my brother."

CHAPTER XIII

THE DEMON OF THE SOUTH

WHILE the scene related in the last chapter was taking place, the huzzas of the soldiers and the joyous flourishes of the brazen trumpets were announcing an event which was putting the whole camp in commotion.

A small body of horsemen had been descried approaching from the direction of Brussels, and the scouts who had been sent out to inspect them returned at full gallop, with the news that the leader of the troop was none other than the emperor's only son, Philip, Prince of Spain, King of Naples, and husband of the Queen of England.

The noise of the trumpets drew everybody out of the tents to inspect the new comer.

Philip, who was then about twenty-eight, rode his beautiful white horse with grace and skill, was dressed in a violet cloak and a black velvet tunic—that is to say, in regal mourning; and, with the exception of his buff leather boots, which reached high up the leg, the whole of his costume, including even the black velvet cap with its sable plume, was as black as night, and he wore the necklace of the order of the *toison d'or*.

The emperor, who had been passionately attached to Philip's mother, would also have loved the son, but the warmth of his father's heart failed to melt the wall of ice which seemed to envelop that of the Prince of Spain, and the generous impulses of Charles were nipped and blighted by coldness and formality.

Charles had been one of the first informed of the unlooked-for advent of his son, and was not a little relieved to find that his son had no reason to conceal his presence in Flanders from him. He took the arm of one of his

officers and dragged himself painfully to the door of the tent to meet the prince, who was advancing amidst braying trumpets, beating drums, and shouting soldiery, as if he already were lord and sovereign.

"Well, well!" muttered the emperor, "God's will be done!"

As soon as Philip saw his father, he stopped his horse, dismounted, and advanced slowly and respectfully to kneel before him.

This humility chased away the last suspicion from the mind of the emperor; he raised and embraced his son, and then, turning to his companions—

"I thank you, gentlemen," said he, "that, knowing the joy which my son's arrival would cause me, you announced it to me by your shouts and huzzas."

"Come, Philip," continued he, "it is five years since we have met, and we must each of us have much to say to the other."

And, bowing to the crowd of officers and nobles, he retired once more into the tent, leaning on the arm of his son, and followed by cries of "Long live the King of England!" "Long live the Emperor of Germany!" "Long live Don Philip!" "Long live Charles the Fifth!"

As Charles had said, they had many and weighty matters for each other's ears, and yet there was a minute's silence. Philip respectfully declined to sit down beside his father on the couch, took a chair opposite, and waited for the emperor to commence the conversation.

"My son," said Charles, "nothing less than your arrival could have dispelled the gloom which the news I have this day received have produced upon me."

"The saddest part of the news is already known to me, as indeed my being in mourning shows," answered Philip. "You have had the misfortune to lose a mother, and I a grandmother."

"Ah! they told you of this in Belgium?"

Philip bowed. "In England, sire; we have direct communication with Spain by water, while your majesty's courier would have been obliged to come round by Gènes, which must have detained him."

"Ah!" said Charles, "it would be so; but besides this I have another subject of uneasiness."

"Your majesty doubtless speaks of the election of Paul the Fourth, and of the treaty between him and the King of France, which is to be signed to-day."

Charles looked at the prince in astonishment. "My son," said he, "has an English vessel brought you this news also? it is far from Civita-Vecchia to Portsmouth!"

"No, sire, I learnt it through France; I heard it before your majesty, because it came straight from Ostia to Marseilles, and thence to Boulogne and London; while your messenger had to cross the Alps, which are still blocked up with snow."

Charles frowned; he had long considered it his right to know every event before the whole world, and here was his son, who had not only heard of the death of the queen mother before him, but actually informed him of this alliance between France and the Pope, which he knew nothing about.

Philip did not appear to notice his father's astonishment.

"Caraffa's measures had been so well considered, that he was enabled to send the treaty to the King of France during the conclave, and doubtless this is what has emboldened Henry the Second, after taking Marienbourg, to march upon Bouvines au Dinant, with the intention, doubtless, of cutting off your retreat."

"What!" exclaimed Charles, "is he as far advanced as that? and am I to be caught in a trap as I was at Inspruck?"

"I hope not, for your majesty will not refuse to conclude a truce with Henry of France."

"By Heaven!" exclaimed Charles, "I should be mad if I were to refuse, and even if I were not to propose it."

"Sire," answered Philip, "your majesty's proposing this truce would render Henry too supercilious, and therefore Queen Mary and I have thought of putting ourselves forward in the interest of your dignity."

"And you come to ask my permission to act? Good, do not lose time; send the most skilful ambassadors you have to France—they cannot arrive too soon."

"It was that reflection that induced us to despatch the Cardinal Polus to Henry to demand a truce, of course subject to your majesty's approval."

Charles the Fifth shook his head.

"He will arrive too late," murmured he; "Henry will be at Brussels before the cardinal is at Calais."

"Therefore the cardinal has come by way of Ostend, and has joined the King of France at Dinant."

"Skilful as he is," said Charles, with a sigh, "I doubt his succeeding in such a negotiation as this."

"Then it gives me the greatest pleasure to be able to announce to your majesty that he has been successful. The King of France accepts an armistice, if not a truce. The monastery of Vocelles, near Cambray, has been selected for the conferences; and the cardinal, when he announced his success to me at Brussels, said he thought it would be best not to raise objections on this score."

Charles stared in mute astonishment at the young man, who came in this quiet and unostentatious manner to announce the happy conclusion of a matter which the emperor himself had looked upon as impossible.

"And what is to be the duration of this truce?"

"The real or the nominal duration?"

"The nominal."

"Five years, sire."

"And the real?"

"What it pleases God."

"And how long do you fancy it will please God that it shall last?"

"Why," answered the King of England and Naples, with a scarcely perceptible smile, "just long enough for your majesty to levy a reinforcement of ten thousand Spaniards, and for me to send ten thousand English to your assistance."

"My son," said Charles, "this truce was my greatest wish at present, and, as you have obtained it, I promise that you shall break it or not at your own pleasure."

"I do not understand your majesty," said Philip, whose command over himself could not prevent a glance of hope and ambition from flashing from his eyes. He saw that the sceptres of Spain and the Netherlands were almost within his grasp, and that perhaps even the imperial crown might be his also.

A week later the truce was signed in the following terms:—

"There shall be five years' truce, both by sea and land, between the subjects, states, kingdoms, and principalities of the emperor, and of the King of France, and of King Philip.

"There shall be an entire suspension of hostilities, but each party shall retain the places they have gained in the present war.

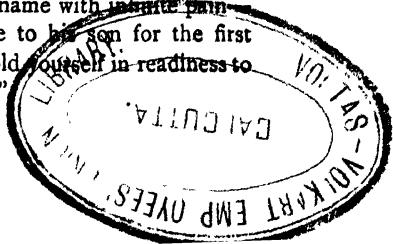
"His Holiness the Pope Paul the Fourth is included in this truce."

Philip presented the treaty with his own hand to his father, who looked almost with terror at the passionless face of the prince.

The treaty lacked only the signature of Charles the Fifth. Charles the Fifth signed.

Then, when he had signed his name with infinite pain

"Sire," said he, using this title to his son for the first time, "return to London, and hold yourself in readiness to return to Brussels at my request."



CHAPTER XIV

CHARLES KEEPS HIS PROMISE

ON Wednesday the 25th of October, 1555, the streets of Brussels were thronged, not only with the inhabitants of Brabant itself, but also with people from every state which owned the sway of Charles the Fifth.

A great assembly, the object of which was still unknown, had been summoned by the emperor, and, after being once postponed, was to be held that day.

The interior of the great hall of the old palace had been gorgeously decorated, and at one end had been erected a sort of stage with an ascent of four or five steps, and covered with the richest fabric, and supporting three seats overshadowed by a dais bearing the imperial arms. These seats were evidently destined for the Emperor Philip, who had arrived at Brussels the evening before, and the emperor's sister Mary, Queen Dowager of Hungary.

The space, which extended from this stage in the form of a horse-shoe, was filled with seats.

Philip, Mary of Hungary, Queen Elinor, the widow of Francis the First, Maximilian of Bohemia, and Christine, Duchess of Lorraine, were installed in the palace, but Charles the Fifth still inhabited what he called his little house in the park.

At four o'clock the emperor set out for the palace mounted upon the easy and gentle mule, which was the only mode of transit he could bear, and followed by a long train of princes and nobles on foot. He was now such a martyr to the gout, that, even supported on each side, it was with the greatest pain and difficulty that he managed to walk even the small distance from the door to the throne.

He was clad in the imperial vest of cloth of gold, and wore the necklace of the *toison d'or* and the imperial crown, but the sceptre, which his hand could no longer hold, was borne before him on a red velvet cushion.

Those who were to occupy the seats and benches were now introduced ; on the right sat the knights of the *toison d'or*, on the left the princes and nobles of Spain, and behind them the privy counsellors, the counsellors of state, and the counsellors of finance. In the middle were the states of Brabant, Flanders, and the rest of the Pays Bas.

The galleries had been crammed with spectators from an early hour in the morning.

The emperor entered, leaning on the shoulder of William of Orange, who was afterwards so noted by the name of William the Silent ; next to William of Orange came Emmanuel Philibert with his squire and page.

On the opposite side, in advance of all the kings and princes, walked a man of from thirty to thirty-five, whom none of them knew, and who seemed quite as much astonished to see himself there as they were to see him.

It was Odoardo Maraviglia, who had been brought out of his prison, presented with a magnificent court dress, and led to this station without informing him where he was going.

As the emperor entered every one rose ; he walked slowly and painfully towards the throne, and it could easily be seen that it required all the courage he was master of to control the cry of agony which rose to his lips at every step.

On reaching the throne Charles sat down, placing Don Philip on his right and Queen Mary on his left, and signed to the counsellor, Philibert Brussellius, to read the proclamation.

All faces except that of the prince expressed intense curiosity and excitement ; his pale visage alone seemed

cold and unmoved, his eye alone seemed indifferent to what was taking place.

The oration shortly proclaimed that the assembled kings, princes, nobles, knights of the *toison d'or*, and members of the Flemish assembly, had been convoked to hear the abdication of the Emperor Charles the Fifth in favour of his son Don Philip, who would now succeed to all the titles of King of Castille, Leon, Grenada, Navarre, Aragon, Naples, Sicily and Majorca, of the Isles and Indies of the Atlantic and Pacific; Archduke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy, of Lothier, of Brabant, of Luisbourg, of Luxembourg, and Quelieres; Count of Flanders, Artois, Burgundy, Hainault, Zealand, Holland, Hagaenau, Namiu, and Zutphen; Prince of Zwane, and Marquis of the Holy Empire, Lord of Frise, Salmi, Malines, Utrecht, Overysse, and Groeningen.

The imperial crown was reserved for Ferdinand of Rome.

This reservation was the only thing which produced the slightest effect upon the passionless countenance of the prince.

This abdication, which fell like a thunderbolt upon the whole civilized world, was attributed by the orator to the emperor's daily increasing longing to return to Spain, and to his sufferings from the gout, which were aggravated by the climate of the Netherlands, and the speech was finished by an appeal to the states of Flanders, to concur cheerfully in the cession of authority by Charles in favour of his son.

The most profound silence reigned through the hall. It was indeed a sight to awe all minds, and soften all hearts, to see this mighty potentate, this god of victory and power, after forty years of glory and supremacy, descend voluntarily from that throne, from which all the efforts of Francis, Solyman, and Luther had been powerless to dislodge him, and proclaim aloud the vanity of human strength.

But a still more extraordinary spectacle was to follow

—that of a man publicly acknowledging a fault, and asking pardon of him whom he had injured.

The emperor gathered all his strength for the effort.

"My friends," said he, "I have promised myself to make reparation to a man whom I have injured."

Then, turning to the stranger, whose magnificent costume everybody had remarked—

"Odoardo Maraviglia," said he, in a firm voice, "come hither."

The young man to whom this formal speech was addressed turned pale, and approached with a doubtful and uncertain step.

"Count," said the emperor, "whether voluntarily or involuntarily it matters not, I have grievously injured you in the person of your father, who suffered a cruel and secret death in the dungeons of Milan. That deed has often presented itself to my mind shaded by the veil of doubt; to-day it presents itself wrapped in the shroud of remorse. Count Maraviglia, before all present, under the eyes of God and man, from the moment of throwing off the imperial robe which I have worn for six-and-thirty years, I humiliate myself before you, and entreat you not only to pardon me, but also to intercede for me with God, who will perhaps accord more to the supplication of the victim than of the murderer."

Odoardo Maraviglia fell on his knees, with a cry of astonishment.

"Most noble emperor," said he, "it is not without reason that the world calls you the august. Yes, I pardon you, both in my father's name and my own. But I, of whom shall I ask a pardon which I dare not grant to myself?"

Then rising—

"Gentlemen," said he, turning to the assembly, "gentlemen, you see in me a man who has tried to assassinate the emperor, and he not only pardons me, but also asks

pardon from me. King Philip," added he, turning to him who was henceforward to be called Philip the Second, "the murderer places himself in your hands."

"My son," said Charles, whose strength was failing once more, "I recommend this man to you; let his life be sacred!"

"Ah! my dear Emmanuel," said the Duke of Savoy's page, gliding to his side, "how kind, how great you are! I see your influence in all this."

Then Charles seated Philip on the throne, and placed the crown on his head with his own hands, saying—

"May Heaven grant that this crown be not a crown of thorns for thine elected."

Charles then made a step in the direction of the door.

Don Philip, the prince of Orange, Emmanuel Philibert, and many others rushed forward to support the ex-emperor, but he motioned them back, and beckoned Maraviglia to his side.

Thus he left the assembly, amidst cries and acclamations; a mighty monarch retiring from the world, a humble Christian reconciling himself with his God, a repentant sinner tottering to the tomb, supported by the son of the man whom he had caused to be foully murdered twenty years before, in the blood-stained fortress of Milan.

On arriving at the door, he dismissed the young man, and, mounting the mule upon which he had come to the assembly, he rode away, accompanied only by a single groom, and no one who had seen the humble pilgrim riding slowly on his way could have fancied that it was the mighty emperor whose abdication was filling Brussels with astonishment and alarm, and was to ring on the swift wings of rumour from one end of the world to another.

On arriving at the park, Charles found the gate open, and rode straight in. The door was open, like the gate, and he entered leaning upon the shoulder of the groom.

Seating himself on a couch by the fire, he allowed his

memory to wander back over his past life, the history of half a century—and what a half century; the age of Henry the Eighth, Maximilian, Clement the Seventh, Francis the First, Solyman, and Luther. He passed in review the events of his reign, as a traveller in the decline of life remounts the verdant and flowery paths which he descended in his youth.

The voyage was long, glorious, and marvellous, and led him past crowds of courtiers, who worshipped his very footsteps, through the acclamations of the world, and over kneeling nations and conquered lands.

Suddenly this glorious dream was disturbed by the homely incident of a coal flying out of the fire and falling upon the carpet, which immediately began to smoulder and smoke.

"Here!" cried he; "quick! somebody here! Who is in waiting?"

No answer.

"Is not anybody there? Make haste some of you!" cried Charles, impatiently.

Still no answer; every one, from the prince to the attendants, had gone to salute the new king.

"Ah!" murmured the ex-emperor, dragging himself painfully towards the cinder, "am I alone and abandoned already? By Heaven, if Providence wishes me to repent what I have done, it does not delay its lessons."

As Charles was crushing the last sparks with his foot, the form of a man appeared in the doorway. "At last!" murmured the emperor.

"Sire," said the new comer, seeing that Charles had mistaken him, "you will excuse my presenting myself thus, but, finding all the doors open, and nobody to announce me, I am forced to take the liberty of announcing myself."

"Then announce yourself by all means," answered Charles, "for I do not know you."

"Sire," answered the stranger, in a voice of mingled respect and pity, "I am Gaspard de Coligny, Admiral of France, and Envoy Extraordinary of his Majesty King Henry the Second."

"Then the Envoy Extraordinary of his Majesty King Henry the Second has come to the wrong door," answered Charles, bitterly; "he should have addressed himself to my successor, Philip the Second, who has been King of Naples for nine months, and King of Spain for twenty minutes."

"Sire," said Coligny, in the same respectful voice, "whatever changes may have taken place in the fortunes of King Philip the Second, either nine months or twenty minutes since, yet to me you are still the sovereign elect of Germany, the most mighty, most holy, and most august emperor, Charles the Fifth; and as it is to your majesty that my king's letter is addressed, allow me to deliver it to you."

"In that case, my dear admiral, will you assist me to light the candles, for it seems that the accession of my son to the throne has deprived me of everything, even to my last lacquey."

And the emperor, with the admiral's assistance, set about lighting the candles in order to read Henry's letter, and moreover Charles was impatient to see the man whom he had found so formidable an adversary for the last three years.

At this time Gaspard de Coligny was a man about thirty-eight years of age, with a martial face, a brilliant and sparkling eye, a tall and well set figure, and a daring and faithful heart. He had been as great a favourite with Francis the First as he was with Henry the Second, and was destined to be with Francis the Second.

The emperor looked at his visitor with manifest admiration, for it was difficult to conceive a man bearing more perfectly the appearance of a soldier and a general.



CHARLES V. AND COLIGNY

Still, as Charles looked at the admiral, he understood, with one of those rapid flashes of instinct which so seldom failed him, that Coligny had been sent to Brussels, not so much to deliver him the letter as to see what took place on this eventful 25th of October; thus the first question he addressed to him was—

“And when did you arrive, admiral?”

“Only this morning, sire,” answered Coligny.

“And you have brought me——?”

“This letter from his Majesty King Henry the Second.”

The emperor took the letter, but after several useless efforts, found himself unable to break the seal, to such an extent had the gout stiffened his fingers. Coligny offered to assist him.

“By my troth,” exclaimed the emperor, “I should make a fine knight to break a lance, when I cannot even break a seal.”

Coligny broke the seal, and was about to return the letter, but Charles stopped him.

“No, no,” said he, “the eye is almost as weak as the hand. Ah, you will admit that I have done well in resigning my power and authority to a younger and a stronger man.”

The admiral commenced reading the message without answering, and while he was thus employed, Charles, who seemed to see nothing, was really watching him with the eye of an eagle.

The letter from Henry simply stated that he now sent the agreement for the truce in due form, that before sent having been only a draft. Coligny then drew the document, sealed with the great seal of France, from his breast, and presented it to Charles. The counterpart, bearing the seals of Spain, Germany, and England, had been sent to France long before.

The emperor glanced over the formal terms of the con-

tract, as if he divined that a year would not pass before they would all be broken, and flung to the four winds of heaven ; then, laying down the parchment, and leaning on Coligny's arm, to regain his seat—

"It is a strange freak of fortune," said he, "that to-day, when I am powerless and alone, I should be supported by the arm which nearly hurled me down from the pinnacle of my sovereignty and glory."

"Oh, sire," said Coligny, "no one could bring down Charles the Fifth but himself ; and if it was the lot of pigmies like myself to strive against the giant, the struggle only served to show our weakness and his strength."

This compliment, coming from a man like Coligny, was evidently anything but displeasing to Charles ; still he exclaimed, as he motioned his visitor to be seated—

"Enough of this, admiral ; I am no longer either emperor, king, or prince, and I must learn to live without flattery. How is my brother Henry ?"

"Well, sire, by Heaven's blessing," answered Coligny.

"Ah ! I am heartily glad to hear it ; and not without reason. You know that, by the mother's side, I am allied to the king who wears the noblest crown in the world. By-the-bye," continued he, affecting to bring back the conversation to ordinary topics, "I hear that he is getting grey : is it true ? Why, it seems only yesterday that he was in Spain, a mere boy with a smooth chin, and yet twenty years have flown by since then — twenty long years !"

And Charles sighed, as if these words brought back all the unforgotten glories of the past.

"Indeed, sire," answered Coligny, "his majesty does begin to show two or three grey hairs, but what man of his age, or indeed even younger, does not ?"

"Wait, wait, my dear admiral, let me think ; I know I have a kind of cabalistic message to send to my brother Henry. Ah ! I remember, Is there not a young man

called Gabriel de Lorges, Comte de Montgomery, at your court?"

"Yes; a great favourite of the king's; he is captain of the Scotch Guard."

"A great favourite, is he?" said Charles, thoughtfully.

"Has your majesty anything to say against him?" asked the admiral.

"No," said the emperor; "but listen to a story I have to tell you. When I was crossing France, with the permission of my brother Francis, for the purpose of suppressing the revolt of my dear subjects of Ghent, I had with me a sort of astrologer, who was said to be able to tell, by the first glance at a man's face, whether he meditated any attempt upon the life or liberty of those who trusted to him.

"We were on the road from Orleans to Fontainebleau, when we saw a cloud of dust coming towards us, and were rather in fear that it might be a troop of soldiers whom my dear brother Francis had sent to arrest us; but we soon saw velvet and gold shining through the mist, and that it was an escort of honour, and not a hostile troop. We continued our way, and were soon met by the dauphin and his followers. He welcomed me so cordially in the name of his father, that I can assure you I had not the least suspicion after that minute. While I was embracing the dauphin, our companions became completely mingled, and I saw that my Italian astrologer, Angelo Policastro, had pushed his horse forward, and was riding by my side. It seemed to me that this was somewhat impertinent in a man in his position.

"Signor Angelo," said I, 'what are you doing here?'

"I am at my post, sire," answered he.

"I do not think so, signor; fall back a little."

"I neither will nor ought to do so, sire," answered he.

"I saw immediately that something was wrong, so, fearing lest he should obey my first injunction—

“‘Well, then, stay where you are, signor,’ said I, ‘only on our arrival at the château you will tell me what your reason was.’

“‘I will not fail, sire,’ said he; ‘but look at that young man with the long fair hair, who is riding on my left.’

“‘Well, what of him?’

“‘Nothing now, sire.’

“Well, when we entered the château, Signor Angelo followed me.

“‘Well, and what about the young man with the fair curls?’ I asked.

“‘Did you remark, sire, the line which there is in the brow between his eyebrows?’

“‘No, by my faith,’ said I, ‘I had something better to do than to look for wrinkles in a young man’s face.’

“‘It matters not, sire; we astrologers call that line the line of death. Sire, that young man will kill a king.’

“‘A king or an emperor?’ I asked.

“‘I cannot say; he will strike some head that wears a crown.’

“‘Ah! and have you no means of ascertaining whether that head is mine or not?’

“‘Yes, sire; but in order to do that, I require a lock of his hair.’

“‘His hair! and pray how am I to get any of his hair?’

“‘I do not know, sire,’ answered Angelo, ‘but without it I cannot tell you who he will kill.’

“I began to reflect how I might obtain the desired article, when a beautiful young girl, the daughter of the gardener, appeared with a basket of flowers. I stopped her, and, dropping a couple of bright gold pieces into her hand—

“‘My pretty maid,’ said I, ‘do you want to gain ten more?’

“‘What am I to do for it, your Majesty?’ asked she.

“‘Look,’ said I, taking her to the window and showing her the young man with the fair hair, who was walking in the garden, ‘you see that young man?’

“‘Yes, your Majesty.’

“‘Well,’ said I; ‘bring me a lock of his hair to-morrow morning, and instead of two gold pieces, I will give you twenty.’

“‘But how shall I get his hair, your Majesty?’ asked she, looking at me, naively.

“‘Oh! that is no business of mine,’ said I; ‘you must find a way to get it.’

“The young girl went out smiling thoughtfully, and the next day she came back with a long gold-coloured curl, and received her twenty gold pieces. Ah! admiral, the most innocent girl is more than our match in intrigue and tact.

“I gave the curl to Signor Angelo; he made his experiments upon it, and then told me that the danger did not threaten me, but a king who bore the *fleur de lys* on his coat-of-arms. Well, admiral, this young man with the fair curls, who has the line of death between the eyebrows, is called Gabriel de Lorges, Comte de Montgomery, the captain of my dear brother Henry’s Scotch Guard.”

“What! your Majesty suspects——?”

“I!” said Charles, “I suspect nothing; Heaven forbid. I only repeat to you, word for word, a story which may be useful to my dear brother Henry, and I warn his most Christian Majesty to take notice of the wrinkle between the eyes of the captain of his Scotch Guard, which Signor Angelo Policastro called the line of death, and which he said menaced a king who carried the *fleur de lys* on his arms.”

“Sire,” said Coligny, “your message shall be delivered to the king of France.”

“Here, admiral, take this as a keepsake from an old

enemy," said Charles, throwing over the ambassador's neck a magnificent gold chain, to which hung that splendid diamond star which was called the Star of the West.

Coligny would have received the present kneeling, but Charles prevented him, and as the admiral turned to go, he met Emmanuel Philibert entering to pay his respects to the emperor, who seemed to him even grander in his solitude and retirement, than he had been in his glory and power.

The two captains saluted each other with the greatest courtesy—they had seen each other on the field of battle, and knew each other's real value.

"Has your majesty any further message for the king, my master?" asked Coligny.

"No, none."

Then, looking at Emmanuel Philibert with a smile—

"Except, my dear admiral, that if the salvation of our soul left a little leisure, we should occupy it by finding a husband for Mademoiselle Marguerite de France."

Then, leaning on the arm of the Duke of Savoy—

"Come, my dear Emmanuel!" said he, "it seems to me an age since I saw you."

CHAPTER XV

THE COURT OF FRANCE

ABOUT a year after the abdication of Charles the Fifth, as the rich July sun was flooding the fields of yellowing wheat below Saint Germain with one gorgeous stream of golden light, a brilliant troop might have been seen to issue from the old château and take their way towards The Park, whose great trees already began to glow

ruddy and bright with the crimson and orange tints of autumn.

It was indeed a brilliant troop, for it was composed of the king, Henry the Second of France, his sister Marguerite, the beautiful Duchesse de Valentinois, the Dauphin Francis, Henry's daughter, Elizabeth de Valois, the lovely and fairy-like Mary, Queen of Scots, then a mere girl; and of the principal nobles and ladies of that gay and sparkling court.

On the balcony of the château, leaning on the richly wrought ironwork of the railings, stood the queen, Catherine de Medicis, with the two young princes, who were afterwards crowned—one as Charles the Ninth, the other as Henry the Third, and who were now of the respective ages of seven and six—and lastly, a little girl of five years old, whose childish grace and elegance were not unworthy of her after fame, and of the halo of romance and love which played around the fair head of Marguerite de Valois, and of Marguerite de Navarre. The three children were too young to accompany their father in the hunting expedition for which he was bound.

Catherine de Medicis had excused herself from joining the party, on the ground of being unwell; and, as she was one of those women who never do anything without an object, we may conclude that whether she had any real indisposition or not, she had at all events a reason for being indisposed.

We have said that the king's sister, Madame Marguerite de France, rode at his right hand, and it may not be amiss to devote a few words to her.

The princess Marguerite de France, the most accomplished and one of the most beautiful ladies of her day, was at this time between thirty-three and thirty-four years of age.

How came it that so noble and fair a princess had remained single so long? There were two reasons—one

which she announced publicly to all the world, another which she hardly dared to confess even to herself.

When she was still very young, Francis the First had wished to marry her to M. de Vendôme, the first prince of the blood, but the haughty girl had replied that she would never marry a man who would one day be the subject of her brother.

This was her avowed reason for remaining unmarried ; but what was that secret reason, which was most likely to be the true one ?

During the conferences of Nice, between the Pope, Paul the Third, and Francis, the Queen of Navarre went to visit M. de Savoie at the château, and took Madame Marguerite with her. The old duke was infinitely pleased with the young princess, and proposed a marriage between her and Emmanuel Philibert. The two young people were introduced to each other, but Emmanuel, who was entirely engrossed with his exercises, his love for Leona, and his friendship for Scianca-Ferro, had scarcely noticed the princess ; but it had not been the same with her. The image of the young prince had taken firm hold of her heart, and when the negotiations had been broken off, and war once more declared between France and Savoy, she had been stricken with a girl's despair, which nobody paid any attention to, but which she cherished in her heart and nourished with her tears, until it settled down into a gentle melancholy, which was mingled with that vague hope which never abandons a true and loving mind.

Twenty years had rolled by since that interview ; the fair plains of Saint Germain had been gilded with the suns of twenty summers, and whitened by the snows of twenty winters, and the princess had found some pretext for refusing every offer, however advantageous.

Whilst waiting till chance, or Providence, should favour her secret desires, the Princess Marguerite had grown both in height and years, and become a lovely and charming

woman, full of grace, kindness, and pity. Her fair golden hair fell in shining masses on her snowy shoulders and her bright hazel eyes contrasted strangely with her fair hair, while her strongly marked nose and full lip showed endurance and determination.

At the king's left hand rode his mistress, Diane de Poitiers, Comtesse de Biezé, who, in spite of her five and-fifty years, had a skin as fair and fresh, and hair as rich and black, as a girl's; and rumour said that the Constable de Montmorency was by no means insensible to her charms.

Behind the king rode the Dauphin Francis, and between his affianced bride, Mary Stuart, and Madame Elizabeth de France.

The dauphin, who was fourteen years of age, was a delicate and sickly boy, with light brown hair, and eyes which were expressionless and wandering, whenever they were not looking at the Queen of Scots; then, indeed, they suddenly assumed an ardour and passion which changed the boy into a man. He was but little inclined to bodily exercises, and seemed a prey to a constant languor and lassitude, the cause of which the doctors sought in vain.

Over the head of the young Princess Elizabeth floated unseen the stern cold shadow of her future lord, and all the sad and terrible romance which awaited the bride of Philip the Second and the affianced of his son.

Alas! there was no brighter fate in store for the fair and sparkling girl who rode on the other hand of the dauphin, and whose grace and beauty, wrought up with the tale of her sufferings and trials, echoed far and wide through a sympathising world, and still suffice to throw a brilliant halo round the name of Mary Queen of Scots.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ROYAL HUNT

HARDLY had the last pages and squires of the royal cortège disappeared beneath the chestnuts and beeches of the forest, before Catherine de Medicis withdrew from the balcony, leading the young princes, Charles and Henry with her ; and having sent off the elder to his tutor, and the younger to her ladies, she remained with the little princess Marguerite, who was still young enough to be allowed to see and hear anything.

The young princes had scarcely left the room when Catherine's confidential valet-de-chambre entered, and announced that the two persons whom she expected were in attendance.

The Queen had attached herself to the Guise party. Her husband was one of those feeble characters who can never rule alone ; one day he ruled conjointly with the constable, and the Guises were everything that was bad ; the next day he and the Guises ruled France together, and the constable was in disgrace.

A noble and a powerful family were the six Guises, headed by Francis, the great Duke of Guise, surnamed "le Balafre," from the scar on his cheek, whose state and splendour were almost regal, whose horses came from Africa and Spain, whose falcons were presents from Solymán and the infidel princes, to whom the King of Navarre wrote a state letter announcing the birth of his son, afterwards Henry the Fourth, and to whom even the Constable de Montmorency, in writing to him, commenced "Monseigneur," and signed "your most humble and obedient servant," to which the duke replied in a letter which commenced, "Monsieur le Connetable," and ended "your very good friend" ; a

statement, by-the-bye, which was entirely untrue, for the Guises and the Montmorencies hated each other like cat and dog.

The duke was at Rome fighting against the Duke of Alba, and had left the house of Guise to be represented by Charles Cardinal de Lorraine, whom Pius the Fifth called the "Pope on the other side of the Alps," who was as proud as a Guise and as treacherous as an Italian, who conceived and executed the idea of the league and the Saint Bartholomew, and who found no little favour in the eyes of his sovereign lady Catherine de Medicis.

This was the man whom Catherine expected; but she had not expected to see him accompanied by a young man of from twenty-five to twenty-six, who was elegantly dressed although he was evidently in travelling costume.

"Ah! you, M. de Nemours!" exclaimed the queen; "you come from Italy. What news from Rome?"

"Bad, madame," replied the cardinal, while the young man saluted the queen.

"Bad! Do you mean that our dear cousin the duke has been beaten? Take care how you tell me that, for I shall say it is impossible."

"No, madame," answered the Duc de Nemours, "M. de Guise has not been beaten; as you say, that is impossible. But he has been betrayed by Caraffa, abandoned even by the Pope, and he has despatched me to inform the king that his position is no longer tenable, with honour either to himself or to France, and to beg either for speedy reinforcements or his instant recall.

"And according to our agreement, madame," said the cardinal, "I have conducted M. de Nemours to you."

"But," exclaimed Catherine, "the recall of M. de Guise would be abandoning the claim of the King of France to the throne of Naples, and my own to the duchy of Tuscany."

"Yes, truly, madame; but, remember that it cannot be

long before we have war in France, and that then it will not be a question of reconquering Naples or Florence, but of protecting Paris."

"What! Paris! You are witty, M. le Cardinal. It seems to me that France can protect France, and that Paris can defend itself."

"I fear that you are in error, madame," said the cardinal; "our best troops are in Italy with my brother, and had it not been for the conduct of the Cardinal Caraffa, and the treason of the Duke of Parma, who has so far forgotten what he owes to the King of France as to make common cause with the Emperor Philip the Second, would have had plenty of occupation in protecting Naples; but now that he knows that the army he has in Italy is amply sufficient to hold us in check, he will naturally turn his eyes towards France, and will not fail to profit by our weakness, even without counting that the nephew of the constable has just played a trick which will give Spain an appearance of justice in this breaking of the truce."

"You refer to the descent upon Douay?" said Catherine.

"Exactly so."

"Listen," said the queen. "You know that I detest the constable as cordially as you do; therefore, do you work for his downfall: I will not hinder you; on the contrary, I will afford you all the aid that lies in my power."

"And in the meantime, what do you decide upon?" asked the cardinal. Then, seeing that Catherine hesitated: "You may speak before M. de Nemours," said he. "He is of Savoy, it is true, but he is as truly our friend as the prince Emmanuel Philibert is our enemy."

"Decide yourself, cardinal," said Catherine, throwing a side glance at the prelate; "I am but a weak woman, and our sex is not fitted for politics."

The cardinal readily understood the queen's glance; she had no friends—she only had accomplices.

"Still, madame," answered Charles de Guise, "do me the favour to express your opinion, and you will permit me to combat it, should it be in opposition to my own."

"Well, then," replied Catherine, "my opinion is, that, the king, being the sole head of the state, should receive all important information before any one else, and that, if M. le Duc be not too fatigued, it would be better for him immediately to remount his horse and join the king, so as to deliver to him the news which your friendship has, I regret to say, made me mistress of, even before him."

The cardinal turned towards the Duc de Nemours as if about to speak, but the latter interrupted him.

"I am never fatigued," said he, "when I am required for the king's service."

"In that case," said the cardinal, "I will tell them to give you a fresh horse; and, at all events, I will inform the secretaries that the king will hold a council immediately upon his return from the hunt. Follow me, M. de Nemours."

The young duke saluted the queen, and was about to follow the cardinal, when Catherine lightly touched the arm of Lorraine.

"After you, monsieur," said Charles de Guise.

"Monseigneur!" exclaimed Nemours, hesitating.

"Lead the way, I beg."

"Yes, and I order you, M. le Duc," said the queen.

The duke saw that Catherine had some private matter to communicate to the cardinal, so he made no further difficulty about taking precedence, and went out, allowing the curtain to fall behind him.

"What is it, my dear queen?" asked the cardinal.

"I wanted to tell you," answered Catherine, "that King Louis the Eleventh, who, in consideration of a loan of five hundred thousand francs, gave my ancestor, Laurent de Medicis, permission to add three *fleurs de lys* to his arms, used to say 'If my nightcap knew my secret, I would burn

my nightcap.' Remember this maxim of Louis the Eleventh's; you are too confiding, cardinal."

The cardinal smiled at this piece of advice being given to him, that is to say, to the man who passed for the wariest politician in Europe; but even he had met with one more cautious than himself, in the person of Catherine de Medicis, the Florentine.

The cardinal, in his turn, passed the curtain, and saw the prudent young man, who was determined not to be suspected of eavesdropping, waiting for him at the end of the corridor.

They descended together into the courtyard, where a horse, ready saddled and bridled, was immediately placed at the disposal of the duke, who sprang into his seat with all the grace of a finished horseman, and set off for the forest at full gallop.

The young man had been told that the king would probably find the quarry near the track to Poissy; he therefore directed his course towards that place, hoping to find the hunting party by the sound of the horns.

But on arriving at the Poissy track, he neither saw nor heard anything of the chase, and an old woodcutter told him that it had taken the direction of Conflans.

Nemours followed the route indicated, and in about a quarter of an hour he suddenly came upon a cavalier who had stopped his horse in an open place where two paths crossed, and was standing up in his stirrups to see further, and putting his hands to his ears in order to hear better.

He was evidently some hunter who had lost the chase; but although he had missed it, he probably knew more about its direction than the young duke, who had only arrived from Italy half an hour before. Nemours, therefore, rode straight up to him, and recognised Gabriel de Lorges, Comte de Montgomery, and Captain of the Scotch Guard.

As Nemours had imagined, the count was endeavouring

to refind the hunt, and the position he had chosen, overlooking five or six roads, was well suited for his purpose. The young men, who had not seen each other for six months, naturally had a hundred questions to ask one another; the count, on the subject of the success of M. de Guise's arms in Italy—the duke, regarding the numerous love affairs, and the endless scandal of the court.

They were engrossed in this most interesting conversation when Montgomery suddenly fancied he heard the baying of the hounds in the distance.

The count was correct in his idea; and as they looked in the direction of the noise, they suddenly saw an enormous boar pass like a flash of lightning across the end of the path, closely pressed by the foremost hounds; then came the mass of the pack running steadily together, then the laggards.

The count instantly put his horn to his mouth, and sounded "*la vue*," in order to assemble the stragglers, of whom there must have been plenty, for three persons only passed after the hounds—a man and two women.

By the ardour with which the man followed the chase, the two cavaliers fancied they recognised the king, but it was impossible, at that distance, to say who were the two amazons by whom he was so closely followed.

The Duc de Nemours and the Comte de Montgomery put their horses to the gallop, and darted off in pursuit of the chase, which their position allowed them to cut into at an angle.

The king had indeed roused the boar on the Poissy track, and it had broken cover with all the ferocity and obstinacy of an old tusker, and headed straight for Conflans. The king sounded the "*lancer*," and darted off in pursuit, followed by the whole hunt.

Wild boars are bad courtiers, and this particular boar had started off at full speed through the very thickest brushwood and brambles, instead of keeping to the open

road and the large timber, as any well-behaved animal would have done. The consequence of this was, that, after about a quarter of an hour, only the most ardent of the hunters and three ladies kept up with the king. These three ladies were the king's sister Marguerite, Diane de Poitiers, and the little queenlet, Mary Stuart, as Catherine de Medicis used to call her.

In spite of the courage of the illustrious hunters and huntresses, the difficulties of the ground, the thickness of the wood, and the height of the bushes, gave such an advantage to the boar and the dogs, that the former might probably have made his escape altogether, had it not been that, unluckily for him, at the edge of the forest he found the wall, which obliged him to return by the way he had come.

The king, who relied upon his famous grey dogs, had reined in his horse patiently to await this result, and had afforded the scattered nobles time to rejoin him. The baying of the hounds was soon heard once more, and the chase now took a more open part of the forest ; still, what had happened before took place again : one by one, or rather two by two, the lords and ladies fell behind and missed the chase, for we fear that they did not all put their splendid horses to their full speed in the king's hunting parties ; indeed, the groups who met at the various cross paths seemed particularly to pay little attention to the horn, which was just audible in the distance ; and this perhaps may have had something to do with the fact that when the Comte de Montgomery and the Duc de Nemours caught sight of the boar, it was only followed by a cavalier and two ladies.

The boar was evidently flagging, and could not hold out long ; and indeed, before many seconds were over, the redoubled barking of the dogs announced that the boar, determined to sell his life dearly, had turned to bay.

The sound of the king's hunting horn mingled with the

baying of the dogs, for he was not a dozen yards behind them ; he turned to look for his arquebuse-bearer, but he had distanced all his companions, even those whose duty it was never to quit him, and he only saw the fair Diane and Mary Stuart coming after him at full speed.

The sound of the king's horn soon brought up the arquebuse-bearer, with one arquebuse in his hand and another on the pommel of his saddle.

The boar, in spite of the courage of the famous "king's greys," knocked them over right and left with single blows of his tusks.

The king saw that it was quite time to put an end to this butchery, and throwing down his hunting horn he made a sign for his arquebuse.

The match was ready lighted, and the arquebuse presented was instantly handed to the king, who took a deliberate aim between the animal's eyes and fired ; but at that very instant the beast lowered his head, and the ball, glancing off the slope of its hard bony forehead, inflicted only a slight wound, and resulted in killing one of the dogs.

Henry remained for an instant in astonishment that the animal had not been killed, and then held out his hand for the second arquebuse, which was ready loaded, and with the match lighted, but before he had time to take a second aim, the boar, by a violent effort, suddenly shook off the dogs, which were clinging around him, and, charging through the pack, and leaving a bloody trail as he went, rushed furiously between the legs of the king's horse, ripping up the unfortunate animal, which reared and fell back, entangling the king in its fall.

All this was the work of a single instant, and passed so rapidly that none of the spectators had sufficient presence of mind to rush to the assistance of the king, who was now in an excessively dangerous position, the boar having turned round and once more come to the charge, before Henry had even got time or power to draw his hunting knife.

Brave as the king was, he had already opened his mouth to call for help—for the hideous head of the beast, his snout covered with blood, and grinding his terrible tusks, was only a few inches from his chest—when suddenly he heard a firm and steady voice whispering in his ear: “Do not move, sire, and I will answer for your safety.”

Then Henry felt his arm raised, and saw a bright and pointed blade darted like lightning past him, and plunged up to the hilt in the side of the boar; at the same instant two vigorous arms seized him from behind and drew him from under the horse, leaving the new adversary exposed to the attacks of the dying boar.

He who had drawn the king out of his dangerous position was the Duc de Nemours; the other, who with one knee on the ground, and his arm extended to its full extent, had driven his sword through the animal’s heart with a powerful and certain stroke, was the Comte de Montgomery.

Montgomery rose, drew his sword from the body of the huge beast, wiped it on the long grass; and then, having quietly returned it to its sheath, approached the king, as if nothing out of the way had happened, saying:—

“I have the honour to present to your majesty M. le Duc de Nemours, who is the bearer of news from M. le Duc de Guise and the brave army in Italy.”

CHAPTER XVII

THE CONSTABLE AND THE CARDINAL

Two hours after the scene we have just related, and when all the congratulations had been paid to the saviour of the king, Henry, with the smiling face of a man who has just escaped a great danger and still feels himself strong, hearty, and ready to confront others, entered his cabinet attended

by the Cardinal Charles de Lorraine, and the Constable de Montmorency, together with his ordinary counsellors.

Henry saluted the constable in a friendly and soldierlike manner, and the cardinal with a deferential bow.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I have summoned you in consequence of the very important news which M. de Nemours has brought from Italy. Things are looking black there, in consequence of his Holiness the Pope having broken his word, and of the treason of most of our allies. Your gallant brother, cardinal, immediately saw that he could only count upon the men he had brought with him; but, being something like you, my dear constable, and not fearing anything so long as he had a sword in his hand and a few thousand brave men at his back, he attacked Campli, which he carried by assault, putting the whole population to the sword."

The constable gave a grunt of approbation.

"From Campli," continued the king, "the duke marched to lay siege to Civitella, which appears to be built upon a steep hill and to be strongly fortified. The attack was commenced before the breach was practicable, and unluckily the spot chosen was surrounded by bastions; the result was, that our troops were repulsed with a loss of two hundred killed and three hundred wounded."

A smile of joy broke over the lips of the constable—the invincible had been beaten before a fifth-rate fort.

"During this time, the Duke of Alba had collected an army of fifteen thousand men, more than double of what the Duc de Guise possessed, in order to force us to raise the siege, and has now entirely shut in the army of M. de Guise, who has despatched M. de Nemours to us to beg for instant reinforcements, or else for permission to return to France. I have therefore sent for you to ask your advice how to act under these difficult circumstances."

"Sire," said the constable, "it is my opinion that an affair so successfully commenced must not be abandoned,

and that your majesty should use every effort to support your army in Italy."

"And you, cardinal?" asked the king.

"I, sire," answered Charles de Lorraine, "ask the constable's pardon, but my opinion is directly in opposition to his. I am of opinion that it would be good policy to recall him and his army."

"You forget, cardinal, that we are at peace, and have no need of all these illustrious conquerors."

"I beg your majesty to ask the constable if he seriously believes in the duration of this peace," said the cardinal, turning to Henry.

"Believe in it—of course I do?" exclaimed the constable.

"Well, I, on the contrary, do not believe in it; and indeed I think that if your majesty wishes to deprive the King of Spain of the glory of attacking us, you had better declare war at once."

"What! in spite of our solemn truce?" exclaimed the constable, with an ardour that a bystander might have fancied to be genuine. "You forget, cardinal, that it is every man's duty to keep his oath, and a king's even more than other men; and that France has never broken her word even towards Turks and Saracens."

"In that case," asked the cardinal, "how did it happen that your nephew, M. de Chatillon, instead of stopping quietly in his own government of Picardy, made a descent upon Douay, which would have been successful, had not an old woman who was passing given the alarm?"

"Why did my nephew do it?—I'll tell you why he did it!" exclaimed the constable, rushing head-foremost into the trap.

"Let us hear," answered the cardinal.

"There were ten causes. In the first place, the attempt made upon Metz by M. le Comte de Megue, Governor of Luxembourg."

"Which, like that of your nephew happily, failed. But this is only one excuse—you promised us ten, constable."

"Oh, stop, that was not all; the Comte de Megue bribed a soldier to poison all the wells in Metz. You cannot say that this is not true, cardinal, for the soldier was hung."

"I do not see the force of that argument, constable; your family always had a taste for hanging innocent men."

"What! have you got the face to deny the count's attempt to poison the wells at Metz?"

"Quite the contrary—I am perfectly willing to admit it, if it will give you any pleasure; but you promised us ten excuses—I have only heard two."

"By Heaven, I will find you plenty. I suppose you know that the Count de Berlaimont and the Sieur de Veze had been induced by the King of Spain to agree to give up the town of Bordeaux to him? You had better deny this, cardinal, and I will tell you that one of the accomplices was arrested at Saint Quintin and has confessed all. Come, you had better deny that, cardinal."

"Heaven forbid that I should deny the truth," answered the cardinal; "but this is only the third time that his majesty the King of Spain has broken the treaty of Vincelles—you promised us ten."

"I tell you once more, you shall have your infernal ten, and a dozen too, if you want them. Was not Jaques de Fleche, one of the best engineers in the Spanish service, arrested while sounding the river Oise? and did he not confess that he was employed by Emmanuel Philibert to procure plans of Montreuil, Roye, Douleus, Saint Quintin, and half a dozen other places?"

"That is perfectly true, constable; but still, we are a long way from our ten."

"Hang your ten—have I not given plenty of reasons to show that in reality Spain has already broken the truce, and that if my nephew did make a descent upon Douay he was perfectly right in doing so?"

"That is the very point I wanted to bring you to, constable; and I confess that these four proofs are perfectly sufficient to convince any reasonable man that Spain has already broken the truce, and that, the truce being broken, not once, but four times over, it is Philip the Second who has broken his word, and that the King of France will not break his, by recalling his army and his general from Italy, and by preparing for war."

The cardinal had hardly ceased speaking when a strange trumpet was heard in the courtyard.

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed the king; "go and inquire, M. de l'Aubespine, who blows that trumpet."

M. de l'Aubespine went to execute the king's orders, but returned in about five minutes, saying:—

"Sire, it is an English trumpet, blown by the outrider of the herald sent by her majesty Queen Mary."

M. de l'Aubespine had scarcely finished speaking, when another trumpet was heard playing an air decidedly Spanish.

"Ah!" exclaimed Henry, "after the wife comes the husband."

Then with that majesty which he was so well able to assume:—"Gentlemen," said he, "let us adjourn to the throne-room, and let our court be assembled. We must do honour to the messengers of our cousins Mary and Philip."

CHAPTER XVIII

WAR

THE noise of the English and Spanish trumpets had rung not only in the council chamber, but throughout the palace, like a double echo from the north and south.

The king found the greater part of the courtiers already

assembled, and the ladies all at the windows, staring at the two heralds and their suites.

At the door of the council chamber the constable was accosted by a young officer who had been sent to him by his nephew, the Admiral de Coligny, who, as we have already said, was governor of Picardy, and who consequently would be the first attacked in case of an invasion.

"Ah, is that you, Théligny?" said the constable in a low voice.

"Yes, Monseigneur," answered the young officer.

"And you bring me news from the admiral?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"You have not seen or told them to anybody?"

"The news are for his majesty; but I am instructed to inform you of them first."

"Very good—follow me."

And as the cardinal had conducted the Duc de Nemours to the apartment of Catherine de Medicis, so the Constable de Montmorency conducted Théligny to that of the Duchesse de Valentinois.

During this time the court had assembled in the throne-room. Henry had the queen on his right hand, and was surrounded by his ministers, while Mesdames Marguerite and Elizabeth de France, Marie Stuart, the Duchesse de Valentinois, the four Maries, and indeed all the ladies of that elegant and brilliant court, were seated on the couches opposite.

The king gave orders for the introduction of the English herald.

Long before he appeared, the clang of his spurs and those of his escort were heard approaching; at last he entered, dressed in the tabard with the English and French arms, and advanced without uncovering within ten paces of the king; then he uncovered his head, and, kneeling on one knee, pronounced the following oration in a clear powerful voice:—

"Mary, Queen of England, Ireland, and France, unto Henry, King of France, sends greeting: Inasmuch as you have held relations and friendships with the English Protestants, enemies to our person, our religion, and our State, and have afforded them succour and protection against our just punishment, we, William Norry, herald of England, proclaim war against you, both by sea and land, and in token thereof we throw down our gauntlet in defiance."

And the herald hurled his iron gauntlet on the floor, at the very feet of the king.

"It is well," said Henry, without rising; "I accept the challenge, but I wish all the world to know that I have always kept faith with your queen; but since she attacks me in so unjust a cause, I pray Heaven that it may not profit her any more than it profited her ancestors when they attacked mine; but I wish to speak quietly and civilly, since it is a queen and not a king that sends you; were it a king, I should reply in a very different tone."

Then turning to Mary Stuart—

"My fairy Queen of Scotland," said he, "as this war regards you as well as me, and as you have more claim to the crown of England than our sister Mary has to that of France, we beg you to pick up the gauntlet and to present our friend Sir William Norry with the gold chain which you wear round your neck, a chain which our dear Duchesse de Valentinois will kindly replace by her necklace of pearls, and I engage that she shall not lose by so doing. Go, my child—it wants a woman's hand to pick up a woman's glove."

Mary Stuart rose, and with exquisite grace took the chain from her neck and threw it round that of the herald; then, with an air of pride which sat well on her beautiful face—

"I pick up this glove," said she, "not only in the name of France, but also in that of Scotland. Herald, tell this to our sister Mary."

The herald rose, and, bowing slightly, withdrew to the left of the throne.

"The desires of their majesties of France and Scotland shall be executed," said he.

"Introduce the herald of our brother Philip the Second," said Henry.

The same clang of spurs which had announced the entrance of the English herald, was heard once more, and the Spanish herald made his appearance, even more proud and haughty than his colleague; he advanced within ten paces of the king, and, instead of kneeling, he contented himself with slightly bowing, and stood twirling his moustache before he spoke, which he did at last, in the following terms:—

"Philip, by the grace of God, King of Castille, Leon, Grenada, Navarre, Aragon, Naples, Sicily, Majorca, Sardinia, and the Isles and Indies of the Pacific; Archduke of Austria, Duke of Burgundy, Lothier, Brabant, Limbourg, Luxembourg, Guelders, Count of Flanders and Artois, Marquis of the Holy Empire, Lord of Frise, Salines, Malines, and of the cities, towns, and lands of Utrecht, Over-Yssel, and Groëningen, Governor in Asia and Africa; to you, Henry of France, for reason of the descent made upon the town of Douay, and the pillage of the town of Sens, which have been committed by order of your Governor of Picardy, in contravention of the truce of Vancelles, we denounce war against you, both by sea and land, and in the name of my king, I, Guzman d'Avila, herald of Castille, Leon, Grenada, Navarre, and Aragon, throw down my gauntlet in token of defiance."

And, drawing the gauntlet from his right hand, the herald chucked it insolently at the feet of the king.

Henry's dark face seemed to grow pale with anger as he noticed the demeanour of the Spanish herald.

"Our brother Philip," said he, "takes the initiative, and addresses to us the reproaches which he himself deserves ;

but, since he has a grievance against us, he would have done better to have challenged us personally. We should willingly have met him man to man, and let God judge between us. Tell him, Don Guzman d'Avila, that we accept his challenge of war with the greatest alacrity, but that, if he should wish to turn it into a personal encounter, we should accept with even greater pleasure."

The constable touched the king's arm in an expressive manner, but Henry continued—

"And you may add, that when we made this proposal, you saw the Constable de Montmorency touch our arm to remind us of the prophecy that we should die in a duel, and that, at the risk of that prediction being accomplished we repeated our offer, hoping that it might assist in reassuring our brother as to the result of the trial, and might influence him to accept our proposition. Monsieur de Montmorency, as Constable of France, have the goodness to pick up our brother Philip's gauntlet."

Then, turning once more to the herald—

"Here, my friend," said he, taking a bag of gold which was lying ready behind him, "it is far from here to Valladolid, and since you have come solely to bring me such welcome news, it is not fair that you should spend your own money or your master's on the journey; we beg you, therefore, to accept these hundred gold crowns for your expenses."

"Sire," answered the Spaniard, haughtily, "my master and I belong to the land where gold grows, and we have only to stoop when we are in want of it."

And, bowing to the king, he stepped back.

"Ah!" murmured Henry, "proud as a Castilian. Monsieur de Montgomery, take this sack and throw the gold to the poor."

Montgomery took the bag and emptied it from the window, its contents being received with perfect howls of joy by those below.

"Gentlemen," said Henry, rising, "it has always been the habit at the court of France to give a fête whenever war has been declared against us by any neighbouring sovereign. There will be a double fête to-night, since there is a double cause for rejoicing."

Then, turning to the heralds—

"Sir William Norry and Don Guzman d'Avila," said he, "since you are the subjects of the fêtes, you are invited by right as representatives of our sister Mary of England and our brother Philip of Spain."

"Sire," whispered the constable, "does your majesty desire to hear some news fresh from Picardy, which my nephew has sent by a lieutenant named Théligny, of the dauphin's company?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Henry, "bring him to me—he will be welcome."

Five minutes afterwards the young man was shown into the king's private cabinet, where he stood respectfully waiting until the latter should speak to him.

"Well," said the king, "what news do you bring of our dear admiral's health?"

"Excellent news on that score, sire; I am happy to say that the admiral never was better."

"May Heaven preserve his health, and all will go well. Where did you leave him?"

"A La Fère, sire."

"And what news did he charge you to bring to me?"

"Sire, he desired me to warn your majesty to prepare for a great war. The enemy has assembled upwards of fifty thousand men, and the admiral believes that all that has been done hitherto is only a blind to conceal their real destination."

"And what is the enemy doing at present?" asked the king.

"The Duke of Savoy, who holds the chief command, accompanied by the Duke d'Aerschot, the Comte de

Mansfeld, and Count Egmont, has advanced to the general rendezvous at Givet."

"I have heard all that from the Duc de Nevers," said the king, "and he added, that he thought that Philibert Emmanuel chiefly threatened Rocroy or Mezieres, and that in his opinion Rocroy was not in a state to stand a long siege; that he had requested the duke to see whether it was advisable to abandon it, and since then, that he had not heard further."

"I can inform your majesty," said Théligny. "Monsieur de Nevers had established himself there, and, sheltered by the walls, was enabled to give the enemy so hot a reception that after a slight affair, in which they lost a few men, they thought it wise to retire by the ford of Houssu, between Nismes and Hauteroche, and from thence he took the road by Chimay, Glayon, and Montreuil-aux-Dames; passed La Chapelle, which they pillaged, and Vervins, which they burned, and at last advanced to Guise, and the admiral does not doubt but that their intention is to besiege the place where Monsieur de Vassy is in command."

"What force has the Duke of Savoy under his flag?" asked the king.

"About forty thousand infantry and fifteen thousand cavalry, partly Flemish, partly Spanish and German."

"And how many can the admiral and the Duc de Nevers dispose of?"

"Even by uniting their forces, scarcely eighteen thousand foot and six thousand horse, and amongst these are some fifteen hundred or two thousand English, who cannot be relied upon in case of a war with Queen Mary."

"Then, deducting the necessary garrisons which must be left in the towns, we shall hardly have more than twelve to fourteen thousand men to give you, constable," said the king, turning to Montmorency.

"Well, sire, however few there are, I will do my best with them. I have heard that an old general, called

Xenophon, had only ten thousand men when he accomplished a retreat of nearly one hundred and fifty leagues in face of a hostile army; and that Leonidas, King of Sparta, had only three hundred when he held his ground for a week against the army of Xerxes, which was far more numerous than that of the Duke of Savoy."

"Then you are not disheartened, my dear constable?" said Henry.

"On the contrary, I never felt less so; all I want is a man who can give me some information regarding the state of Saint Quentin."

"And what is that for, constable?"

"Because with the keys of Saint Quentin one may open the gates of Paris, as the old proverb says. Do you know Saint Quentin, Monsieur de Théligny?"

"No, monseigneur; but if I may presume——"

"Yes, confound it, presume, and make haste; the king permits it."

"Well, then, monseigneur, I have with me a sort of squire, whom the admiral gave me, and who, if he chooses, is as capable as any one of enlightening you on the point."

"What?—if he chooses!" exclaimed the constable.

"By Heaven, we will pretty soon make him choose."

"He doubtless will not dare to refuse to answer the questions which are put to him by the Constable of France, only he is as sharp as a needle, and he will answer them as he likes."

"As he likes!—you mean as I like, I suppose?"

"That is the very point upon which I wish you not to make any mistake; he will answer as he likes, and *not* as you like, particularly as you, monseigneur, never having been at Saint Quentin, cannot very well tell whether his answers are true or not."

"If they are not true, I'll have him hung like a dog."

"That would be a way of punishing him, but not of

making him useful. Believe me, monseigneur, the man is shrewd, ready, and brave enough too, when he chooses."

"What do you mean by when he chooses?" broke in the constable; "is not he always brave?"

"He is brave when he can get anything by it, and not, when he cannot. It is as much as can be expected from a soldier of fortune."

"My dear constable," said the king, "when one is anxious for an end, one takes care of the means. This man may be useful to us. Monsieur de Théligny knows him; let him interrogate him."

"Very well," said the constable; "but you know that I have my way of speaking to people."

"Yes, monseigneur," answered Théligny, smiling, "we all know your method, and it has its advantages; but, in the instance of my squire Yvounet, the only result would be that he would join the enemy on the very first occasion, and I take it his information would be even more useful to them than to us."

"To the enemy! He'll desert to the enemy, will he? By Heaven, we'll stop that, for we'll hang him straight off. It seems to me that he is a scoundrel, and a thief, and a traitor, this squire of yours, Monsieur de Théligny."

"He is simply an adventurer, monseigneur."

"Oh, oh! and so my nephew employs these rascals."

"Beggars must not be choosers, monseigneur," answered Théligny, laughing; then turning to the king, "I place my poor Yvounet under your majesty's protection, and I demand that whatever he says or does, I may be allowed to take him back with me, as safe and sound as I brought him here."

"You have my word, monsieur," said the king; "go and bring in your squire."

"If your majesty permits it, I will simply make a sign and he will come."

"Sign."

Théligny went to the window, which opened on to the park, and whistled ; five minutes afterward Yvounet made his appearance.

The young man saw at a glance the kind of company he was in, and he doubtless recognised either the king or the constable, or both, for he stood respectfully at the door.

"Come in, Yvounet," said Théligny ; "here are his majesty Henry the Second, and the Constable de Montmorency, who, upon my report of your merits, desired to see you."

"I thank you, lieutenant," said Yvounet, making three steps forward, and there stopping, half cautiously, half respectfully ; "my merits, small as they are, are at the feet of his majesty and at the service of the constable."

"Come," said the latter, "enough of that stuff ; just answer me straight forwardly, or else——"

Yvounet darted a glance towards Théligny, as much as to say, "Is it a danger that I run, or an honour that is being done me?"

But Théligny, strong in the king's word, answered :—

"My dear Yvounet," said he, "the king knows that you are a gallant cavalier, much attached to the ladies, and spend the greater part of the profits of your courage and intelligence upon your toilet ; and, as he wishes to make use of your intelligence first, and your courage afterwards, he has charged me to promise you ten gold crowns if you will give him and the constable some positive information regarding the town of Saint Quentin."

"Will my lieutenant be good enough to explain to the king that I am a member of a band of good fellows who have all sworn to throw half their gains into the general stock, so that out of these ten crowns, five only will belong to me, and five will be the property of the society?"

"And I should like to know what on earth is to prevent your keeping the ten and saying nothing about it, you confounded idiot?" exclaimed the constable.

"Sire," said Yvounet, with a respect and grace which would have done honour to a finished courtier, "your majesty will observe that I did not fix any price upon my services small or great, which it is both my duty and my pleasure to render to your majesty. It was my lieutenant, M. de Théligny, who spoke of ten gold crowns; but it having been mentioned, I thought it my duty to inform your majesty of a certain association which it was not possible that you should be aware of, and whereby half of your majesty's bounty would be diverted from the person it was intended for. And now that I have explained this to your majesty, I am perfectly ready to afford you any information in my power, without there being any question either of five, ten, or twenty gold crowns."

And the adventurer bowed once more, with a grace which would have been creditable to an Italian prince or a count of the Holy Empire.

"Bravo!" exclaimed the king; "you are right, Monsieur Yvounet, and you will find that you will be no loser by trusting to the generosity of Henry of France."

Yvounet smiled, as if to say, "I know my man."

"Come, Yvounet," said Théligny, "be good enough to prove to his majesty that I was not wrong in praising your intelligence, by giving him and the constable some information as to the present state of the ramparts of Saint Quentin."

Yvounet shook his head.

"One would think the fellow knew something about it," muttered the constable.

"Sire," answered Yvounet, not in the least degree disturbed by this observation, "I have the honour to inform your majesty that the town of Saint Quentin, unaware that it runs any risk, and consequently unprepared to resist an attack, is scarcely in a state to defy an assault."

"But still," said Henry, "it has ramparts."

"Yes," answered Yvounet, "ramparts with alternate

round and square towers, flanked by curtains, and with two horn-works, one guarding the 'Faubourg d'Isle;' but the ramparts have no parapet, and are only defended by an advanced moat, and scarcely rises above the general level of the surrounding country, and is commanded in numerous places by the neighbouring heights, and even by the houses built along the exterior moat, and on the right of the road to Guise, between the Somme and Porte d'Isle, the old wall, as the rampart is called at this spot, is in such bad condition that an active man can easily scale it."

"But you brute!" exclaimed the constable, "if you are an engineer, why on earth did you not say so at once?"

"I am not an engineer, constable."

"Then what, in the name of all the furies, are you?"

Yvounet cast down his eyes with affected modesty.

"Yvounet is attached to a young lady who lives in the Faubourg d'Isle," said Théligny, "and in order to visit her it is necessary to study the strong and weak points of the wall."

"Ah, ah!" murmured the constable, "here is a fine reason."

"Go on, M. Yvounet," said the king, "and I will give you a gold cross to carry to your mistress when you see her again."

"And there never will have been a gold cross hung upon a fairer neck than that of Gudule, your majesty."

"Why, I declare the brute is going to paint his mistress's portrait," exclaimed the constable.

"And why not, if she is pretty?" said the king, laughing; "and now, what garrison is there in Saint Quentin?"

"None!"

"None!" exclaimed Montmorency; "and how on earth does that happen?"

"Because there are no barracks in the town, and the defence in time of war is a right which belongs to the bourgeoisie, and which they are particularly proud of."

"In the first place, then, Saint Quentin must be well garrisoned," said the king.

"The admiral was engaged in negotiating this very matter when I left," said Théligny.

"Now," asked the king, "are the approaches to the town easy?"

"Yes, sire, on three sides, those of the Faubourg d'Isle Remicourt, and of the chapel of Eparguemaille, but on the other side, by Tourrival, it is necessary to cross the marshes of Grosnard, which are full of holes and quagmires."

The constable had returned little by little, and was listening eagerly.

"In case of need," said he, "would you undertake to guide a body of troops across these marshes?"

"Most certainly; but, as I have had the honour of stating before, there is one of my companions, called Maldent, who is even better acquainted with the place than I am."

"Constable," said the king, "be good enough to give this young man forty gold crowns for the valuable information he has afforded us respecting Saint Quentin, and add ten more from me to buy a cross for Mademoiselle Gudule."

"Forty crowns! Forty lashes, forty cuts on the head, forty floggings," grumbled Montmorency.

"You hear me, cousin?" said Henry; "take care that you do not make me break my word."

Then, turning to Théligny—

"Monsieur," said he, "the constable will give you orders to take horses from my stables here and at Compiègne; do not mind killing them, but try to be at La Fère to-morrow. It is important that the admiral should know of the declaration of war as soon as possible. Good-bye, Monsieur, and God speed you."

Théligny and his squire bowed respectfully to the king, and followed the constable.

Ten minutes after, they were galloping along the road to Paris, and the constable went back to rejoin the king, who had not left his cabinet.

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH THE READER RETURNS TO A WELL-KNOWN LOCALITY

LIEUTENANT THÉLIGNY and Yvounet, who had arrived at La Fère in an incredibly short time after leaving the king, presented themselves immediately at the admiral's quarters.

The lieutenant made himself known, and was introduced at once into Coligny's cabinet, followed by Yvounet, who with his ordinary tact, remained standing at the door.

The admiral was bending over one of the incomplete maps of the period, which he was endeavouring to fill in from the information which he was obtaining from a man with a sharp face, a pointed nose, and clear eye, who was none other than our old acquaintance Maldent, the former advocate's clerk of Saint Quentin.

Théligny explained his interview with the king and the constable in a few words, and gave Coligny the letters from his uncle.

"Yes," said the admiral, "I agree with him that Saint Quentin is the most important town to guard, and therefore, my dear Théligny, I sent your company there yesterday, and you shall go and join them this very day, and announce that I shall speedily follow you."

And Coligny once more bent over his map, totally absorbed in the details with which Maldent was furnishing him.

Théligny, who perfectly understood the serious and profound character of the admiral, and knew that in all prob-

ability he would have more directions to give him on the subject of Saint Quentin, as soon as he had finished his chart, ordered Yvounet to go and wait for him at the camp; the latter bowed silently and withdrew, and then, springing on his horse, was outside the town in a few moments.

The admiral's camp, which had first been established at Pierrepont, had afterwards been transferred to La Fère, as he thought that although it would be impossible for him, with his fifteen or eighteen thousand men, to resist an attack in the open country, yet that they would stand a good chance under the fortifications of the town.

Once arrived at the camp, Yvounet stood up in his stirrups to try and see which of the tents belonged to the band of adventurers, of which he was a member; and his attention was soon drawn to a group, in the midst of which he recognised Procope, who was seated on a stone, and was writing, with his knee for a table.

A man, who was no other than Pilletrousse, was making signs to them from the door of a tent, in very decent condition.

Yvounet immediately decided that this must be the tent to a ninth part of which he had a right, and in a few seconds he was by the side of Pilletrousse, who, before welcoming his companion, commenced making, first one, then a second, then a third tour of admiration round his friend.

At the third circle Pilletrousse stopped, and with that peculiar click of the tongue which is so wonderfully expressive—

"Confound it," said he, "and here's a horse; why, it's worth forty gold crowns; where the devil did you steal it from?"

"Hush," said Yvounet, "speak respectfully of the animal; it comes out of his majesty's stables, and is only lent to me."

"That is unlucky," said Pilletrousse.

"Why?"

"Because I have got a purchaser."

"Ah!" said Yvounet, "and who is he?"

"It is I!" said a voice behind Yvounet.

Yvounet turned round to examine the speaker who had made his appearance so much to the purpose. He was a young man of twenty-three or twenty-four, half-armed, according to the ordinary custom of soldiers in camp.

It only needed one glance at the square shoulders, the head, which seemed half-hidden in the mass of red hair and beard, and the clear blue eye, full of dogged ferocity, for the adventurer to recognise his man.

"My gentleman," said he, "you have just overheard my reply; the horse belongs to his majesty the King of France, who had the kindness to lend it me to return to the camp; if he claims it, it is only right that I should return it to him: if not, it is very much at your service—the price, of course, being agreed upon between us beforehand."

"That is my intention," answered the stranger. "I am rich, and know how to be generous."

Yvounet bowed.

"Besides," continued the gentleman, "this is not the only matter in which I require your assistance."

This time Yvounet and Pilletrousse both bowed.

"How many men are there in your band?"

"Unless anything has happened to any of my comrades during my absence," said Yvounet, looking at Pilletrousse "there are nine of us."

"And nine brave men, I suppose?"

Yvounet smiled modestly, while Pilletrousse shrugged his shoulders.

"In truth those are not bad samples," continued the stranger, pointing to Frantz and Heinrich, "if they are members of the troop."

"They are," answered Pilletrouse, with true Spartan brevity.

"Very good ; then we can negotiate the matter."

"Oh, pardon me," said Yvounet, "but we are in the service of the admiral."

"Except two days a week, which we have reserved for ourselves ; Procope introduced this clause into the agreement, in case we should wish either to try any little enterprise on our own account, or to accept any proposition that any honourable gentleman should feel inclined to make to us."

"I shall only want you for a single day and night, so that it will suit to a nicety ; and now, where can I find you when I want you?"

"At Saint Quentin, probably," answered Yvounet ; "personally, I can answer for being there to-day."

"And two of us," continued Pilletrouse, "are there already, namely, Lactance and Malemort ; as to the rest of the troop——"

"As to the rest of the troop," broke in Yvounet, "they are not likely to be long absent, since I heard the admiral say, this very day, that he himself would be there in two or three days."

"Very good," said the gentleman ; "then we meet again at Saint Quentin, my friends."

And with a careless nod the stranger moved off.

Théligny, at this moment, arrived to look for his squire ; he brought the information that the admiral, having now united all the troops that he expected round him, and having consulted with the constable, was about to set out for Saint Quentin with five or six hundred men, including the whole of our adventurers who were not already there.

CHAPTER XX

SAINT QUENTIN

As Yvounet had told the constable, Saint Quentin was six leagues from La Fère, and the horses, which had only arrived from Noyou an hour before, took three hours to perform the distance; at last, however, the two cavaliers crossed the exterior boulevard, left the road to Guise on the right, gave their names at the gates of the town, passed under the old archway, and found themselves in the Faubourg d'Isle.

"Will my lieutenant excuse me for a few minutes, or would he prefer to make a short *détour*, and learn what is taking place in the town?" asked Yvounet.

"Ah, ah!" said Théligny, "it strikes me that *Made-moiselle* Gudule does not live far from here."

"Exactly so, lieutenant."

"But is it not somewhat indiscreet?" asked Théligny.

"Not in the least; by day I pass for a mere acquaintance."

And, turning down a side lane, Yvounet soon came upon a little window half-hidden in nasturtiums and convolvulus, which he could just reach by rising in his stirrups. At the moment of his arrival the window opened, as if by magic, and a charming little face, all rosy with blushes, appeared amidst the flowers.

"Ah, Gudule," said Yvounet, "how did you divine my arrival?"

"I did not divine it. I was at the other window, which looks over the road to La Fère, and I saw two horsemen coming this way; and, though I had no reason to think that you were one of them, yet, somehow I could not take my eyes off them, and as they came closer I recognised

you, and ran here trembling lest you should pass without noticing me, not only because you have some one with you, but also because you are so grandly and beautifully dressed, that I thought you must have made your fortune."

"The person by whom I have the honour to be accompanied, my dear Gudule, and who has allowed me to come out of the road to see you, is my lieutenant, M. de Théligny, who will have a few questions to ask you respecting the state of the town."

Gudule cast a timid glance towards the lieutenant, who saluted her with a polite bow, which was responded to by a blush and a curtsy.

"As to the change of costume you see in me," continued Yvounet, "it is owing to the liberality of the king, who, knowing my acquaintance with you, charged me also to deliver this gold cross to you."

And Yvounet drew out the cross and held it to Gudule, who at first hesitated to take it.

"No, Yvounet," said she, "it is a shame of you to laugh at me."

"I am not laughing at you, Gudule; here is my lieutenant, who will answer for the truth of what I say."

"Indeed, my pretty maid," said Théligny, "I was there when the king gave Yvounet the cross for you."

"Then you know the king?" asked Gudule, quite dazzled by the splendour of such an idea.

"Since yesterday, Gudule, and since yesterday the king knows of you, and of your brave uncle Jean Peuquoy, to whom my lieutenant brings a letter from the admiral."

Théligny gave a second sign of assent; and Gudule, whose hesitation had vanished by this time, passed her little hand tremblingly across the flowers, and took the cross.

"And now, Yvounet," said Théligny, "will you ask the fair Gudule where, and in what disposition, we shall find her uncle."

"My uncle is at the town hall, sir," answered Gudule, with her eyes fixed on the cross, "and I believe in the best disposition for defending the town."

"Thank you, pretty one ; come along, Yvounet."

"Come back soon," whispered she, to Yvounet, as she disappeared behind the flowers.

The two horsemen followed the path between the Somme and the fountain, left the abbey and church of Saint Quentin-en-Isle on the left, crossed a bridge, which brought them opposite the chapel of the holy martyr, then a second, leading to Saint Peter's close, and a third, which stood facing the two towers of the Porte d'Isle.

The gate was guarded by two soldiers of Théligny's regiment and one townsman.

This time there was no need for the lieutenant to give his name : it was the soldiers who came to ask for news ; they said that the enemy was reported to be close, and that the little body of a hundred and fifty men, under the orders of a lieutenant, was somewhat lost in the midst of all these bourgeois, who took fright occasionally, and spent their time in running about the streets, and in endless discussions at the town hall, where there was talking to any extent, but nothing done.

The young officer had made his appearance at an opportune moment. The citizens, prompted by the eloquence of Jean Peuquoy and his brother, had just unanimously decided that Saint Quentin, faithful to its king, and relying on its patron saint, would defend itself to the very last extremity.

The news which Théligny brought of the speedy approach of the admiral, put the finishing touch to their enthusiasm. The bourgeois formed themselves on the spot into bodies of fifty, with an officer to each body. The mayor opened the arsenal of the town hall, which unfortunately only contained some fifteen pieces of cannon of all sorts and conditions, and six-and-thirty

arquebuses, although there were halberds and pikes in plenty.

Jean Peuquoy was elected captain of one of the companies, Guillaume lieutenant of another. Honours were pouring in upon the family; but honours of this description are somewhat dangerous.

The total muster of troops consisted of a hundred and twenty or thirty men of the Dauphin's company, about a hundred of the company of M. de Breuil, governor of the town, who had arrived from Abbeville a week since, and of two hundred bourgeois, divided into four companies of fifty men each; three of these were armed with arblasts, pikes, and halberds, the other had arquebuses.

Suddenly a fifth and unexpected corps made its appearance, and was greeted with shouts of enthusiasm.

It emerged from the Rue Croix-belle-Porte, and was composed of a hundred Jacobin friars, armed with pikes and halberds, and led by a man under whose robe might be seen the sparkling of a coat of mail, and who carried a drawn sword in his hand.

Yvounet turned round, attracted by the shouts, and after staring for some time at their leader—

"May the devil take me," exclaimed he, "if it is not Lactance."

It was indeed Lactance, who, thinking that there was a sharpish campaign coming, had retired into the Jacobin monastery, in order to do penance beforehand for as many sins as possible, and put himself in a state of grace before the killing commenced; but while there he had thought it a pity not to do a little business, and consequently he had communicated to the monks, as an inspiration from Heaven, his idea of forming a religious corps for the defence of Saint Quentin; and, as the holy brothers seemed inclined to look upon it in that light, he had obtained permission to cut an hour off the matins, and another off the vespers, in order to drill the regiment. After three days,

Lactance had thought them sufficiently skilled in military manœuvre to be produced, and he had brought them out into the square of the town hall amid the acclamations of the populace.

Saint Quentin could now count upon one hundred and twenty men of the Dauphin's company, one hundred of the governor's company, two hundred bourgeois, and a hundred monks—in all, five hundred combatants.

Hardly had these forces been mustered, when cries of alarm were heard coming from the direction of the Rue Saint André, and people were seen running with their hands raised to heaven in sign of despair. They had seen a crowd of peasants flying terror-stricken across the plain between Homblières and Mesnil Saint Laurent, trampling down the corn, and evidently endeavouring to escape from some pursuit.

Orders were instantly issued to close the gates and man the ramparts. Lactance, who during the tumult preserved all the calm of a true Christian, ordered his monks to harness themselves to the cannon, and to drag eight to the wall which extends from the Porte d'Isle to the Dameuse Tower, two to the wall of the old market, three between the great tower and the small bridge, and the other two to the old wall of the Faubourg d'Isle.

Théligny and Yvounet, who felt that, in spite of their tremendous journey of the day before, their horses were still good for something, rode out of the gate of Rémi-court, and galloped across the plain to ascertain the cause of the general flight.

In the first individual they met, Yvounet recognised Malemort.

"To arms!" howled the latter, with the full force of his lungs; "to arms! to arms! to arms!" and informed Yvounet, when they met, that the Spaniards had already taken Origny, and were in full march upon Saint Quentin.

Yvounet took his companion behind him on the croup,

and all three returned to Saint Quentin, crying, "To arms!"

The whole town was expecting their return; but so great was the enthusiasm, that the news of the approach of the hostile army only served to increase the confidence of the defenders.

Luckily, amongst the governor's company there were forty gunners, who were distributed amongst the fifteen guns, which the monks undertook to serve.

By this time the heads of the Spanish column were in sight.

The town council determined to send a courier to the admiral, to inform him of their situation; but no one was willing to quit the town in the hour of danger.

Yvounet offered Malemort, who immediately mounted La and galloped off in the direction of La Fère.

The gates were then opened to receive the fugitives from Origny Sainte Benoite, and the townsfolk vied with each other in showing them hospitality. Messengers were then despatched to the surrounding villages, to collect provisions and bring them into Saint Quentin.

The hostile army advanced in an immense line, whose length appeared to show that it was the main body of the Spanish, German, and Walloon forces, that is to say, about fifty or sixty thousand men; and before the sombre line were seen burning villages and flaming farms, just as, during an eruption of Etna, the trees and shrubs seem to catch fire and blaze, even before the lava stream touches them.

The townsmen, grouped upon the Rémicourt rampart, watched all this with intense anxiety, and greeted every fresh fire with a fresh volley of curses hurled at the advancing foe.

For some time the gates remained open; at last the enemy came so close that they were obliged to be closed. Then the unlucky fugitives from the burned and plun-

dered villages were obliged to pass round Saint Quentin, and seek for refuge at Vermaud, Pontru, and Caulincourt.

The drum beat as a sign for all non-combatants to leave the ramparts, and the defenders were left standing, silent, determined, and terrible, like men in a great and universal danger.

"As far as I can see, Yvounet," said Théligny, "it is somewhere about your lady-love's house that the music is going to commence; if you have any curiosity to hear what tune they play, come with me."

"Most willingly, lieutenant," answered Yvounet, with that nervous quiver which always with him preceded a battle; and with clenched teeth and a somewhat pale cheek, he followed Théligny, who took half his soldiers with him, leaving the other half to support, and if necessary set an example to the bourgeois. We shall see in the end that it was the bourgeois who set the example to the soldiers.

As Théligny had foreseen, the music began with a grand crash at the Faubourg d'Isle, and more than once made the listeners lower their heads; but little by little the bourgeois, who had commenced by being the laughing-stock of the soldiers, got accustomed to the work, and became as eager as any one.

The Spaniards, however, poured on in such masses, that the bourgeois were soon obliged to abandon the exterior boulevard, which they had at first tried to defend; but, being protected by the two pieces of cannon and the arquebusiers of the old wall, they retreated in good order, carrying in their wounded, though they left three dead upon the ground.

As soon as the bourgeois and Théligny's soldiers had quitted the boulevard, it was taken possession of by the two Spanish chiefs, Julien Romeron and Carondelet, who occupied all the houses of the Faubourg; but when they

endeavoured to cross the open space between the exterior boulevard and the old wall, they were received with so hot and well-sustained a fire, that they were obliged to fall back once more to the shelter of the houses, from the windows of which they continued firing until the shades of evening put an end to the skirmish of the 2nd August, 1557.

CHAPTER XXI

IN WHICH THE ADMIRAL KEEPS HIS PROMISE

MALEMORT all this time had been galloping along the road to La Fère, where he arrived in about an hour and a half, and rode up to the admiral's door.

Seeing a man arrive at the full speed of his horse, with his clothes covered with dust and blood, and his face bound up in a linen mask, with holes for the eyes and mouth, it was not easy to recognise Malemort; but it was easy to see that, whoever it was, he must be the bearer of some tidings or other, and consequently he was instantly shown into the admiral's apartment.

Coligny was with his uncle the Constable, who had just arrived.

Malemort related the capture of Origny Sainte Benoit, the massacre of those who had endeavoured to defend the castle, and the burning of the villages, which marked the advance of the Spanish army with ruin and desolation.

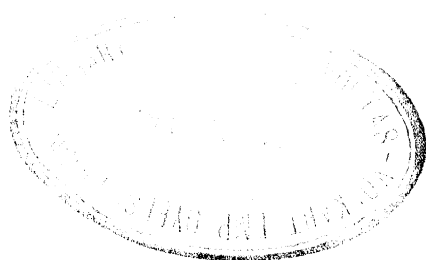
The uncle and nephew instantly settled their separate work. Coligny, with five or six hundred men, was to start immediately, throw himself into Saint Quentin, and defend it to the last extremity, while the Constable, with the rest of the army, was to form a junction with the Duc de Nevers, who, with a troop numbering only eight or nine thousand men, and consequently too weak to



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attack the enemy, who were fifty thousand strong, was hanging about the flanks of the Spaniards, hoping to draw some advantage from their mistakes.

The admiral had "Mount saddle, to horse, and away!" sounded through the camp without delay. On the advice of Maldent, whom he took for a guide, he decided upon adopting the route by Ham, instead of the direct road, calculating, from the information received, that the Spaniards were attacking the town on the sides of Rémi-court, Saint Jean, and the Faubourg d'Isle, and that consequently these three sides were closed.

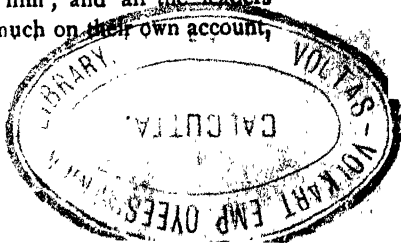
According to Maldent, the only road which they had any chance of finding open was that from Ham, which led across the marshes, and was quite impracticable to any one who was not well acquainted with it.

The admiral took with him three bands under the command of the Captains Saint André, Rambouillet, and Louis Poy. The last, however, had only arrived from Gascoigny the day before, and the men were so fatigued that they were obliged to halt on the road from La Fère to Ham.

The admiral arrived at Ham at about five o'clock in the evening; but, as it was his determination to reach Saint Quentin that night, he continued his march, after resting an hour only, accompanied by his men-at-arms and two companies of foot soldiers.

When they were about two leagues from Saint Quentin night fairly closed in; but Maldent was there, and he answered for the safety of all those who chose to follow him, and, in the hope of being suitably rewarded, offered to walk before the admiral's horse with a lamp round his neck.

Captain Rambouillet's band followed Maldent's lead; but Saint André said that he had a good guide of his own, and preferred following him; and all the leaders were so independent, and so much on their own account,



that Coligny did not like to demand that everybody should trust Maldent as he did himself. Saint André, therefore, went his own way, and left the admiral to go his.

Coligny did not meet with any obstacle. The town had been entirely surrounded on all sides, excepting that of the Faubourg Ponthoille, which had been reserved for the English army, which was hourly expected; and it was exactly opposite this spot that the admiral arrived.

Coligny had surveyed the hostile encampment, and had seen the watch-fires extending from the chapel of Eparguemaille to near Galliard; it seemed as if it had been arranged on purpose to favour his little troop, so much so that he feared that the enemy must have got information of his march, and had consequently formed an ambuscade.

Procope, whose frequent conversations with Maldent had taught him the *patois* of the province, offered to go and reconnoitre; the admiral accepted the offer and halted the troop.

In about three quarters of an hour the pioneer returned. The road was perfectly open, and he had been able to approach so close to the town that he had seen the sentinel on the walls, and had whistled to him across the little stream which at that time flowed immediately beneath the ramparts; the sentinel had stopped and stared out into the darkness to see who was whistling; Procope had repeated his signal, and had then informed the guard of the admiral's approach, and he had promised to inform the watch at the Ponthville gate, so that Coligny might be admitted the very instant he arrived.

The admiral thanked Procope for his courage and intelligence, and once more set out under the guidance of Maldent.

At thirty paces from the gate, a man with a pistol in his hand suddenly sprang up ready to give the alarm in case it

should turn out to be a hostile instead of a friendly troop ; while the ramparts were seen lined with men.

The man with the pistol, who seemed to start out of the moat, was Lieutenant Théligny ; he advanced saying :—

“ France and Théligny.”

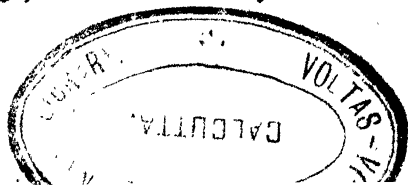
“ France and Coligny,” answered the admiral.

It was really the promised reinforcement ; the gates were opened, and Coligny and his hundred and twenty men admitted into the town.

The news of the arrival soon spread through the town, and the inhabitants ran half dressed out of the houses, uttering cries of joy, and many began to illuminate. But the admiral silenced the cries, and extinguished the lights. He feared lest the enemy's army should understand ; besides, Saint André and his troop had not yet arrived. Three o'clock in the morning came, and brought no signs of them.

When day began to dawn, Lactance advanced with six or eight of his Jacobins, and the good fathers, who were shielded by their dress from suspicion, offered to spread themselves about the country, and look for the lost troop. Their offer was accepted, and they set off in different directions. Between four and five the first troop, of about sixty men, appeared, led by two of the priests, and in about another hour, a second body of about the same number of men, with whom was Saint André himself. Their guide had lost his way, and without the help of the priests misfortune might have overtaken them.

The garrison was now reinforced by two hundred and fifty men. This was numerically but a feeble addition ; but the presence of their leader gave courage to the most timid, and produced an immense moral effect. Théligny, the governor of the town, gave an exact account of the state of affairs to the admiral. Perfectly convinced that it was necessary to defend the Faubourg d'Isle to the last extremity, it was to that point that Coligny first directed his steps.



On the top of the old wall, amidst the balls which whistled around him, he decided that at nightfall a sortie should be made for the purpose of burning the neighbouring houses, from the interior of which the enemy were continually annoying the soldiers on the ramparts. The admiral also ordered them to open an embrasure in each side of the rampart, and to place cannon in each. The admiral then came down to the Hôtel de Ville, and there he asked for a list of all the able men, and commanded a search to be instituted for all the arms that might be in the town, and ordered a list to be prepared where every man or woman ready to assist in the works would inscribe their names ; he also ordered that all the tools, baskets, spades, and pick-axes that could be found should be collected together, and that an account should be drawn up of all the grain, flour, wine, cattle or provisions of any kind in public magazines or in private houses, so as to establish order and avoid pillage. Lastly, he demanded an exact statement not only of the artillery, but of the quantity of powder and ball, and of the number of men who belonged to that service.

On going round the ramparts, Coligny had remarked, near the Porte St Jean, about one hundred feet from the walls, a number of gardens filled with fruit trees, and surrounded by high and thick hedges ; these offered to the enemy a shelter which would permit them to approach the ramparts. The admiral asked permission to cut them down, which was immediately granted, and he at once put in a requisition for all the carpenters of the town for this purpose ; and with what were cut down they were to make fascines.

Then, seeing the whole assembly, nobles, bourgeois and soldiers, animated by the same spirit of enthusiasm, Coligny retired to the governor's house, where he had given a rendezvous to the officers of all the companies. This house was situated in the Rue de la Monnaie. There the admiral acquainted them with all he had done, communicated to

them the good feeling of the inhabitants, and their resolution to defend their town to the last, and entreated them to do their utmost to preserve harmony between the army and the bourgeoisie.

CHAPTER XXII

THE TENT OF THE ADVENTURERS

WHILE all these precautions for the public safety were being taken by Coligny, on whom rested the whole responsibility of the defence of the city, our adventurers (ready also to fight in the same cause, because Coligny had taken them into his pay) waited patiently for the first signal of trumpet or drum, and meanwhile had pitched their tent about one hundred feet from the Porte d'Isle, on a vacant space in front of the Cordeliers. They were now all assembled, and regulating their accounts.

The pecuniary affairs of the community were thus in good condition, and forty golden crowns had been carefully counted and put in the cash box.

Just as Maldent finished counting the last crown, a shadow thrown on the canvas indicated that some opaque body had been interposed between them and the light. Instinctively, Procope extended his hand towards the gold, while Maldent, more rapid, covered it with his hat. Yvounet turned round, and saw in the doorway the same young man who had wished to buy his horse. Quickly as Maldent had covered the gold, the stranger had seen it.

"Ah!" said he, "you are rich; I fear I come at a bad time; you will be hard to do business with."

"That depends on what the business is," said Procope.

"If there be anything to be gained," said Pilletrousse.

"Or any fighting," said Malemort.

"As long as it is not to attack a church or convent, I am ready," said Lactance.

"I shall like it best if it prove a moonlight expedition," said Fracasso.

Yvounet said nothing, and the Scharfensteins were absorbed in their cookery. The stranger smiled. "It is a serious business," said he; "there will be plenty of fighting, and I propose to offer a reward which I trust will satisfy every one. Let all religious scruples be laid at rest; it concerns neither church nor convent, and we shall act at night, although I confess I shall prefer a dark night to a moonlight one."

"Well, then," said Procope, who was generally the speaker, "let us hear your proposal, and judge if it be agreeable."

"You must promise to follow me, whether it be in a nocturnal expedition or a fight in broad daylight."

"To do what?"

"To attack the person whom I shall attack, to surround and kill him."

"And if he surrenders?"

"I warn you beforehand that I shall show no mercy."

"Peste! then it is a deadly hatred?"

"Just so."

"Good," said Malemort, rubbing his hands.

"But," said Maldent, "if the ransom were good——."

"I will provide for that."

"Then you buy him of us, dead or living?"

"Right again."

"How much for the dead, and how much for the living?"

"The same price."

"And yet, it seems to me that a living man is worth more than a dead one."

"No, for I should only buy the living man, that he might become a dead one."

"Well, how much will you give?"

"One moment, Procope," said Yvounet, "until Monsieur de Waldeck has told us who the person is."

The stranger started. "You have pronounced a name——."

"Which is yours, monsieur," replied Yvounet.

The stranger frowned. "How do you know me?" said he.

"Shall I tell you? Do you remember the Château du Parc?"

Waldeck turned pale.

"Do you remember the forest of St Pol sur Ternoise?"

"It is just because I do, that I come here to make you this proposal."

"Then it is the duke, Emmanue! Philibert, whom you want us to kill?" said Yvounet.

"Peste! the Duke of Savoy?" cried Procope.

"You see it was necessary to explain," said Yvounet.

"And why not kill the Duke of Savoy?" cried Malemort.

"I do not say no."

"He is our enemy, since we are engaged to Monsieur de Coligny, and I would as soon kill him as any one else."

"You are quite right, Malemort, only he would be dearer than another."

"Much dearer," said Maldent.

"Besides, it is risking one's soul," said Lactance.

"Oh! never mind all that; what is the price?" said Pilletrousse.

"Yes, that is the point," said Waldeck.

"Well, what do you say to five hundred golden crowns, one hundred on account and the rest when the thing is done?"

Procope shook his head. "It will not do," said he.

"I am sorry for that," replied Waldeck, "for I tell you I can give no more; it is all I have, not a carolus more; if you refuse me, I must treat elsewhere."

The adventurers looked at each other. "Well, reflect," said Waldeck; "I know you, and you know me; we live in the same town, and can easily find each other." So saying, he bowed slightly and left them.

"Shall we recall him?" said Procope.

"Dame," said Maldent, "five hundred golden crowns are not found every day."

"And then," said Yvounet, "if it be really all he has, no one can give more than he has."

"My brothers," said Lactance, "the lives of princes are under the direct guardianship of Heaven, and it is risking your souls to attack them. We should not do it unless for a sum sufficient to buy indulgences for each of us, whether we succeed or fail, for the intention is everything."

"It is true; it is worth more than he offers," said Pilletrousse.

"I vote that we accept," said Yvounet.

"Yes," cried Malemort.

"There is no hurry," said Maldent.

"But if he goes to others."

"Let us accept and fight," growled Malemort.

"Let us accept," joined in the Scharfensteins, who entered at that moment with their roast beef.

"Who will run after him?"

"I," said Malemort.

But just as he was about to do so, he heard firing by the Faubourg d'Isle, which was a directly contrary direction to that taken by M. de Waldeck.

"Oh, they are fighting in the Faubourg d'Isle," said Yvounet; "I must go and look after Gudule."

"But the business?" said Procope.

"I leave it to you to settle;" and he rushed after Malemort.

CHAPTER XXIII

BATTLE

THE reader doubtless remembers that the admiral had commanded a sortie towards evening, to burn the houses along the exterior boulevards, which had sheltered the Spaniards. This order had been given to Messieurs de Théligny, de Garnac, and de Lugarches. Consequently, at six o'clock they assembled 100 soldiers and 120 bourgeois, led by Guillaume and Jean Peuquoy. The 220 men were to attack 2000. About thirty feet from the old wall the road forked, one branch leading to Guise, and the other to La Fère, and on each of these roads lay the houses which were to be destroyed.

The little band had therefore to divide, one going to the right and the other to the left, one of the Peuquoys going with each as a guide. Quiet and rapid as had been their movements, they had been observed, and at the opening of each street they found a body of Spaniards double their own number, and from every window death was prepared to be hurled upon them. Such, however, was the impetuosity of the attack, that the Spaniards were driven back, and that, in spite of the fire from the windows, they managed to enter five or six houses. Malemort was one of the first who entered; and although ignorant of the motive of the sortie, he, unnoticed by the rest, piled up wood in the lower part of the house, and, having set fire to it, ascended the staircase.

The Spaniards soon discovered, from the smoke which issued from the houses, what had been the object of the attack. They rallied again, and fell with their vastly superior numbers upon the little troop, who, however,

had already accomplished a part of their errand, for the flames were rising from several houses.

We may remember that Yvounet had gone to calm the fears of Gudule, who was in great terror, as both her father and uncle were out. He climbed to the top of the house, curious to see what was going on, and, followed like a shadow by Gudule, he could hear the clash of arms, and see the smoke issuing from the houses, and amidst it human beings moving about in terror. They could see men jumping out of the windows, and others trying to escape by the roofs. Soon they distinctly saw Mâlemort (recognisable by the linen bandages on his face) pursuing a Spaniard over the roof. Arrived at the edge of the roof, the fugitive, seeing that he could fly no further, turned, determined to sell his life dearly. The struggle commenced, when suddenly the ground on which it was taking place gave way, and the flames burst through. One man disappeared, but the other was seen to cling to a beam, and then to jump into the Somme.

Soon they saw a head appear, then two arms, and then a body swimming towards the wall of the town. From the direction he was taking it must be Mâlemort, and both Yvounet and Gudule descended rapidly and ran towards the place where he seemed likely to land, and indeed they arrived just in time to draw him from the water, half burned and nearly drowned, and to receive him fainting in their arms.

He, however, got off better than many of his companions, who were forced to retreat in disorder, leaving thirty soldiers and twenty bourgeois dead behind them; and indeed the enemy nearly got into the town *pêle-mêle* with those whom they pursued, and were repulsed with great difficulty by a party of men hastily gathered together. It was no easy task to close the gates, for the enemy opposed it furiously; but at the head of the troops were

the Scharfensteins, and joining their forces they did such good service that the task was soon accomplished.

Then a cry arose, "To the walls! to the walls!" Two incomplete embrasures, in which cannon were intended to be placed, were in course of construction in the walls, and the assailants repulsed from the gates had noticed the works, and were trying to enter through them and carry the town by a *coup de main*. The combat was fierce, when Heinrich Scharfenstein, seizing an immense block of stone which rested on the wall, hurled it on the front rank of the Spaniards, destroying every one with whom it came in contact.

At the other breach, Frantz did wonders, and was soon joined by Malemort, who followed the now flying Spaniards with the greatest impetuosity; he was soon knocked down, however, and would have been killed but for Frantz, who cut open, with his long sword, the head of the Spaniard who was about to put an end to Malemort's life with his dagger; then seizing Malemort by the foot, he dragged him back to the breach and pulled him in quite insensible.

The admiral now appeared with a little band of arquebusiers, who kept up so steady a fire as quickly to disperse the assailants.

The loss had been great, and the faubourg had nearly been taken by assault, and many officers begged Coligny to abandon this point, which had already cost them so dear; but the admiral refused, declaring this faubourg to be of the greatest importance.

He gave orders to profit by the darkness to repair the breaches, and to put all things in order once more. The Jacobins, whose dark dress made them less conspicuous, undertook this business, while the arquebusiers watched over the ramparts, and sentinels were placed at every twenty feet along the line.

This was a sad night for Saint Quentin, the night on which they had to mourn their first killed. Many of the

inhabitants abandoned this faubourg, which seemed destined to be the scene of the fiercest struggles, and among others Guillaume Peuquoy and his daughter, Gudule, to whom their uncle Jean had offered the shelter of his house. Gudule constantly looked back, and was consoled to see that Yvounet was following them at a short distance.

No sooner did they reach the house, than Gudule, pleading fatigue, asked to be shown to her room, and was delighted to find that a little pavilion in the corner of the garden had been assigned to her father and herself, and that a ladder ten feet long would reach the window.

It was true that only a thin partition separated her room from that of her father, and that the sound of voices in her room might awaken his suspicion; consequently, if the lovers met there, they would have to remain mute; but if Yvounet could not come to the room, Gudule might descend to him.

While she was reflecting, she saw a shadow glide along the garden, for Yvounet also was reconnoitring. A few words sufficed for explanation, and before her father's heavy step was heard on the staircase, all had been arranged for the following night; Gudule was ready to close her window, and Yvounet to disappear down the Rue Saint Jean.

CHAPTER XXIV

M. DE THÉLIGNY

DAYLIGHT found the admiral once more on the ramparts; for, far from being downcast by the check of the night before, Gaspard de Coligny had decided on making a new attempt. He hoped that the enemy knew of the help that had arrived, but not of its insignificant numbers, and that the Duke Emmanuel would thus be led to attempt

a regular siege instead of a *coup de main*. Now, a regular siege would give them a fortnight's, or perhaps even a month's respite, during which the constable would make some attempt on his side, or the king would be able to send aid. He therefore called to him the lieutenant, M. de Théligny.

Coligny led him to the parapet of the tower, and said: "Monsieur de Théligny, do you see that detachment of Spaniards yonder?"

Théligny replied that he saw perfectly.

"Well, it appears to me easy to surprise them with thirty or forty men. Have out, then, that number of your company, put at their head a sure man, and let them make the attempt."

"But Monsieur de Coligny, can I not be the sure man? I can answer for my officers, but still more for myself."

"My dear Théligny," replied the admiral, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder, "men of your stamp are rare, and must not be risked in small skirmishes. Give me your word that you will not command this sortie, or, fatigued as I am, I shall remain here on the ramparts."

"Monsieur de Coligny, if such be your real wish, go and repose, leave the care of this enterprise to me; I promise you not to leave the town."

"I rely on your word, monsieur. I shall not return to the governor's house, which is too far off, but go to Monsieur de Garnac's, throw myself on a bed and sleep for an hour or two. There you will find me."

"Sleep tranquilly, monsieur: I will watch."

No sooner was the admiral gone, than Théligny, turning to an ensign, said, "I want forty volunteers from the company of the Dauphin."

"They will be here immediately, lieutenant."

"How so?"

"A man who overheard the words of Monsieur de Coligny ran off at once and gave the order."

"And who is he who executes orders before they are given?"

"*Ma foi!* lieutenant," said the ensign, laughing, "he looked more like a demon than a man; half of his face was covered with a bloody bandage, his hair was burned, his cuirass broken in, and his clothes in tatters."

"Ah! I know him. You are right; he is more a demon than a man."

"And see, here he comes, lieutenant;" and he pointed to a man coming at full gallop, from the *Porte d'Isle*. It was Malemort, who, half dead as he was, was quite ready for another sortie. Behind him came about forty men on horseback. As the sole recompense for his activity, Malemort asked leave to join the expedition, declaring that, if that were not allowed, he would make a sally on his own account. Théligny granted his request, charging him only not to separate from his men, but to fight with them.

Malemort promised all; but scarcely were they out of the gate, than, leaving the little troop, who were winding quietly along a road bordered with trees, he rushed across the open country with loud cries.

Meanwhile the admiral had gone to M. de Garnac's, as he had said; but in spite of his fatigue he was too anxious to sleep, and in about half an hour he rose, fancying he heard cries from the ramparts, and went out. He had scarcely taken twenty steps when he saw Messieurs de Lugarches and de Garnac coming towards him with a frightened air.

"Ah!" said Monsieur de Garnac, "you know already, then?"

"I know nothing; but I was too anxious to sleep, and hearing cries I came out."

"Come, then;" and the two officers quickly remounted the rampart with the admiral.

The premature arrival of Malemort had given the alarm,

and when the officers and soldiers sent by Théligny arrived, thinking to surprise the enemy, they found about double their own number of men on horseback prepared to receive them. At this sight they faltered, some turned round and fled, the most cowardly abandoning the bravest, who were engaged with numbers far too overwhelming for them to contend long against without help. Théligny, forgetting his promise, and armed only with his sword, jumped on his horse and rode as quickly as possible, calling on those who had fled to return with him. Some obeyed him, and with eight or ten men he had rushed to the rescue. Soon after, about a third of the little company returned flying, but M. de Théligny was not with them. They knew nothing more of him, than that they had seen him engage the Spanish, and fall immediately after, covered with wounds. One soldier declared that he believed him to be still alive, for that he had seen a movement in his body as he galloped past. On this feeble hope, Coligny gave orders for a company to go and seek for him, when a kind of Goliath advancing, said, "Pardon, meinheer admiral, but it will not need a company to seek for this poor devil of a lieutenant. I will go, if you please, with my nephew Frantz, and bring him dead or alive."

The admiral recognised Heinrich Scharfenstein, a few steps behind whom stood Frantz.

"Well, I accept your offer, my brave fellows," said he; "what do you ask for doing it?"

"A horse for each of us."

"But I do not mean that."

"I also want two men to ride encroupe behind us."

"Very well, but after?"

"That is all, only we want two strong horses and two thin men."

"You shall choose for yourself."

"Good."

"But the reward——?"

"Oh, that is Procope's affair."

"I do not want Procope to settle it. I promise fifty crowns for Théligny living, or twenty-five for him dead."

"Oh! oh!" laughed Heinrich.

"Well, then, start without losing time."

"Immediately, admiral."

And Heinrich set off to select his horses, which he chose strong and vigorous. Then, to his great joy he saw Lactance and Fracasso approaching, and chose them at once for companions, and started, taking all the precautions which Malemort had disregarded. Great interest was excited by this expedition to recover the body of Théligny, for all believed him to be dead.

In a short time the discharge of eight or ten arquebuses was heard. All trembled; but almost immediately after, Frantz reappeared on foot, carrying two men in his arms; behind him, one man on horseback, the other horse having doubtless been killed, and Fracasso and Lactance, followed on foot.

Eight or ten Spaniards followed, but Heinrich charged among them every instant, while the others fired with a precision of aim which laid a Spaniard low each time.

A cry of joy and admiration burst forth when Frantz advanced, bearing in his arms two bodies, as a nurse might have carried two babies.

He laid one of them down at the feet of the admiral, saying, "There is your man, and he is not dead."

"And who is the other?"

"Oh, it is only Malemort. He will soon be all right; I believe he is the devil, and cannot be killed."

At that moment, amidst the acclamations of all the lookers on, the three others came up.

Théligny was not dead, although pierced with three balls and six sword thrusts, which were easy to see, as the Spaniards, believing him dead, had stripped him quite naked and left him. He was carried at once to M. de

Garnac's and laid on the bed which the admiral had quitted a short time before. Scarcely was he laid down when he opened his eyes and recognised the admiral. "A doctor, a doctor," cried Coligny.

But Théligny extended his hand. "Thanks, monsieur," said he; "God permits a little time only to ask your pardon for having disobeyed you——"

The admiral stopped him.

"Ah! my dear Monsieur Théligny," said he, "do not ask pardon of me; if you disobeyed me, it was through excess of zeal, but if you are as bad as you believe yourself, ask pardon of God."

"Ah! monsieur, I do; but still, in disobeying you, I committed a grave fault against discipline. Pardon me, therefore, that I may die in peace."

M. de Coligny felt the tears rise to his eyes at these words of the young officer.

"Since you wish it absolutely, I forgive you for a fault of which every brave soldier would be proud; and if that alone torments you, die happily and tranquilly."

And he pressed his lips to the forehead of the dying man. He, making a great effort, raised himself a little, murmured, "I thank you," and fell back with a sigh. It was his last.

"Gentlemen," said Coligny, "we have lost a brave comrade. May God grant to all of us a similar death."

CHAPTER XXV

THE MESSENGER

HOWEVER well fought these two small actions had been, they had still been defeats, and showed the admiral their absolute need of prompt assistance, surrounded as they

were by a numerous and vigilant army. He therefore resolved, before the English army should arrive and hem them in completely, to send messengers to his uncle the constable, and beg him for aid.

He therefore called Maldent and Yvounet, and as he felt sure that the constable would be either at Ham or at La Fère, he sent one to each place. He begged the constable to send them reinforcements which were to enter by the still unoccupied side, while Coligny would make a sortie on the other side, in order to occupy the enemy.

Yvounet went to La Fère and Maldent to Ham. But it is Yvounet whom we shall principally follow, as it was he who found the constable.

At three o'clock in the morning he knocked at the gate of the city, which they obstinately refused to open until they learned that it was a messenger from Saint Quentin. The orders were positive to admit any one from thence at once, and bring him to the constable whatever hour it might be. Yvounet found the constable in bed, with his sword under his pillow and his armour on a chair by his side.

When he heard the messenger announced, he raised himself on his elbow, and said, "Come near, fellow."

It not being the time to be susceptible, Yvounet advanced.

"Nearer," said the constable; "I like to see to whom I am talking."

Yvounet came close to the bed.

"Here I am, monseigneur," said he.

The constable took his lamp and stared at Yvounet. "I have seen the fellow somewhere before," said he. "Do not give me the trouble of thinking, but tell me where it was; you must remember."

"And why should I remember better than you, monseigneur?" said Yvounet.

"Because you see once in your life, by some chance, a

Constable of France, while I see every day numbers of fellows like you."

"That is true, monseigneur. Well, I saw you at court."

"What, do you go to court?"

"I was there on the day when I had the honour of seeing you," replied Yvounet, politely.

"Hum! yes, I remember; you were there with a young officer, sent to the king by my nephew."

"Yes, with Monsieur de Théligny."

"Just so. Is all going well at Saint Quentin?"

"On the contrary, monseigneur, all is going badly."

"How! take care what you are saying, fellow."

"The day before yesterday we made a sortie, and about sixty men were disabled. Yesterday, in trying to surprise a post of Spaniards, we lost fifteen men of the company of the Dauphin, and their lieutenant, Monsieur de Théligny."

"What! Théligny killed, after going through so many battles!"

"And here is a letter from Monsieur de Coligny, asking for immediate aid."

"Why did you not give it to me before?" cried the constable, snatching it from his hands.

"I will hold the Faubourg d'Isle as long as I can," wrote the admiral. And he will do well. Mordieu! Let some one fetch me Monsieur Dandelot. 'For from its heights artillery can sweep the whole length of the rampart of Rémicourt, from the Tour à l'Eau to the Tour Rouge.' Let them call the Marshal Saint André. 'But to defend this place, and all the other menaced points, I should require at least two thousand men more, having really but five or six hundred under my command.' Morbleu! I will send him four thousand. Bring here the Duc d'Enghien. Why should they sleep when I am awake? 'I have but sixteen pieces of cannon and only forty artillerymen, fifty

or sixty arquebusiers, ammunition for a fortnight, and provisions for three weeks.' What! can all this be true?"

"The exact truth, monseigneur," replied Yvounet.

"How do the bourgeois behave?" asked the constable.

"Wonderfully well."

"So they ought."

"Even the monks have armed."

"The hypocrites! Do they fight?"

"Like lions. As for the women——"

"Oh, of course, they weep and tremble, that is all they can do."

"On the contrary, monseigneur, they encourage the combatants, they tend the wounded, they bury the dead."

"The jades!"

At that moment the door opened, and a gentleman fully armed, excepting that he had only a velvet cap on his head, appeared at the door.

"Ah! come here, Monsieur Dandelot," said the constable.

"Here is your brother crying out from Saint Quentin, as though he were about to be murdered."

"Monseigneur," replied Monsieur Dandelot, "if my brother cries out, I feel sure that you know enough of him to be convinced that it is not through fear."

"Yes, morbleu! and that is what frightens me. Therefore I sent for you and for the Marshal de Saint André."

"Here I am, monseigneur," said the marshal, appearing at the door.

"Good, marshal. And Monsieur d'Enghien, who does not come——"

"Pardon me," said the duke, entering in his turn, "here I am."

"The question is, gentlemen," said the constable, "how to send help to poor Coligny, who has fifty thousand men against him, unless fear makes him see double."

The three officers smiled.

"If my brother says fifty thousand, it is fifty thousand," said Dandelot.

"And even rather sixty thousand than fifty thousand," said the marshal.

"So say I," said the Duc d'Enghien.

"Well! are you ready to risk something to help him?"

"I am ready to risk my life," said Dandelot.

"And we also," cried the others.

"Then all goes well. But, morbleu! what is that noise in the ante-chamber?"

An officer opened the door and said—

"Monseigneur, they have arrested a man at the gates of Ham."

"Let him be taken to prison."

"We think he is a soldier disguised as a peasant."

"Let him be hung."

"But he says that he comes from the admiral."

"Has he a letter or safe-conduct?"

"No; that is what makes us think he is a spy."

"Let him be broken on the wheel."

"One moment," cried a voice outside; "people cannot be treated like that." And, after a sound of struggle, a man rushed in.

"It is Maldent," cried Yvounet.

"And who is Maldent?"

"The admiral's second messenger, who was sent to Ham."

It was indeed Maldent, who, having missed the constable at Ham, had returned by La Fère to rejoin Yvounet. How Maldent, who had left in military dress, and with a letter from the admiral, arrived in the dress of a peasant and without a letter, we shall find out in one of the following chapters.

CHAPTER XXVI

MALDENT

OUR readers must not be astonished if we follow, with an exactitude belonging rather to the province of the historian than of the novelist, all the details of the glorious siege of Saint Quentin, equally glorious for those who besieged and for those who were within the walls.

During the night which followed the departure of Yvounet and Maldent, the admiral was told that the sentinels on guard at the faubourg fancied they heard the sound of mining. Coligny hurried to the spot, lay down on the rampart, with his ear to the ground, and listened.

"It is not mining," said he, on rising; "it is the rolling of cannon wheels. The enemy are bringing their guns near."

The officers looked at each other; then Jarnac, advancing, said—"Monsieur, you know that every one thinks the faubourg is not tenable."

The admiral smiled. "I think so, also," said he, "and yet you see we have held it for five days. If I had given it up when you urged me, it would have been during those five days in the hands of the Spaniards, and all that remains to do, in order to enter the city on that side, would be finished now; let us not forget, gentlemen, that every day we gain is important to us."

"Then your opinion, monseigneur——"

"Is, that we have done all that was possible to do on his side, and that we must now devote our strength and energy to other quarters."

The officers bowed in sign of acquiescence.

"At daybreak," continued Coligny, "the Spanish guns

will be up, and the firing will commence, and by that time all that we have here of artillery, ammunition, and tools, must be taken into the city. Part of our men will occupy themselves with that task, and the rest will fill the houses with faggots, and set fire to them. I will watch over the retreat, and have the bridges cut down behind our soldiers."

Then, seeing the dismayed look of those to whom the houses belonged: "My friends," said he, "if we spared your houses, the Spaniards would destroy them, and would use the wood and the stone for their works. Sacrifice them yourselves, therefore, for the good of your country. I charge you with the task of setting fire to them."

The inhabitants whispered together for a few minutes, and then one of them advancing, said, "Monsieur de Coligny, I am Guillaume Peuquoy; you may see my house from here: it is the largest in the place. I promise to set fire to mine, and my neighbours and friends will do the same by theirs."

"Is that true, my brave fellows?"

"If it be for the good of the king and the country."

"If we can hold out another fortnight, we shall save France."

"And you think it necessary to burn our houses?"

"I do."

"And if we do, you will hold out."

"I promise, my friends, to do everything that a gentleman, devoted to his king and his country, can do. Whoever talks of surrendering shall be thrown over the walls; and if I speak of it, do as much for me."

"Good, monseigneur; when you tell us to burn our houses, we will."

"But," said a voice, "I trust you will spare the abbey of Saint Quentin."

The admiral turned towards the speaker, and recognised Lactance.

"That, least of all," replied the admiral; "from the roof

of that abbey one can overlook the whole rampart of Rémicourt, and cannon placed there would render the defence of that rampart impossible." Lactance sighed, and raised his eyes to heaven.

"Besides," continued Coligny, "Saint Quentin is the protector of the city, and would not desire his abbey to be an injury to it."

He then ordered the men to begin moving the various things, and to pile the wood in the houses. All worked with so much good will, that by two o'clock in the morning there remained there only the necessary number of arquebusiers to make the enemy think it defended, and the men, who stood with torches in their hands, ready to set fire to the houses.

At daybreak, as the admiral had foreseen, the Spaniards fired their first volley. This was the signal agreed on for setting fire to the houses. No one hesitated; each heroically applied his torch, and in a few minutes a cloud of smoke arose, which soon gave place to flame. The whole faubourg was burning, with the exception of the abbey, which escaped as by a miracle.

The admiral, after watching the flames for some time, went home to breakfast, and took some repose, having eaten nothing since the evening before, and having been up all night. Just as he sat down, it was announced to him that one of the messengers whom he had sent to the constable had returned, and asked to speak to him.

It was Yvounet, who came to announce to the admiral that help would arrive on the morrow, led by his brother M. Dandelot, and by the Duc d'Enghien. It would consist of four thousand men, and Maldent had remained to serve as a guide to them.

All that day (the 7th August) passed without the enemy making any hostile demonstration; they seemed confining themselves to a simple blockade. Doubtless they were waiting the arrival of the English army. In the evening

the sentinels remarked some movement on the side of the Faubourg d'Isle. The Spaniards of Carondelet, and those of Romeron, profiting by the decline of the fire, began to enter the faubourg and approach the town. All the surveillance, therefore, was concentrated on that side.

At ten o'clock the admiral called together, at his house, all the principal officers of the garrison, and announced to them that he expected a reinforcement that night. They must, therefore, silently and secretly man the walls, so as to be ready to give aid if necessary.

The side where Jean Peuquoy's house stood was left almost solitary, for no attack was apprehended on that quarter. Therefore, about eleven o'clock, in one of those dark nights so blessed by lovers who want to meet, and by generals planning a surprise, Yvounet, followed by Heinrich and Frantz, all three armed to the teeth, advanced cautiously along the Rue de la Rosiere, and the Rue Saint Jean, in order to reach the rampart of the *vieux marché*.

In spite of their formidable appearance, however, this group had no hostile intentions; but Yvounet had asked the Scharfensteins to accompany him on his love expedition, sure of safety when with them; and they, who entertained a great friendship for him, and always listened with great respect to all his stories and adventures, went willingly with him whenever he asked them. Neither were they inconvenient companions, for they were always ready to close both eyes, and keep them shut as long as was necessary. Another advantage was, that to reach the window of Gudule's room a ladder had been necessary, but Yvounet found it more simple to mount on the shoulders of his two friends, which did just as well.

Yvounet had a collection of signals and signs, by which he announced his presence to his mistress; but that evening there was no need of signals, for Gudule was at her window waiting; only, seeing three men arrive instead of one, she

withdrew. But Yvounet advanced alone, and she, reassured once more, made her appearance.

A few words sufficed to explain to Gudule the danger which a soldier in a besieged city would incur if he should be seen running about with a ladder on his back ; the patrol would be sure to think that he was about to communicate with the besiegers ; he would be taken before an officer, perhaps even before the governor, and there explain the destination of the ladder, an explanation which might have proved disagreeable to Gudule. It was better, then, to bring friends, of whose discretion he was sure.

"But how could these two friends replace a ladder?" she asked. Yvounet immediately prepared to demonstrate this. At his request Heinrich leaned his back against the wall, Frantz then placed one foot on his uncle's outstretched hands, and another on his shoulder, then, having thus reached the height of the window, he seized Made-moiselle Gudule, who was looking curiously on, round the waist, and, before she had time to make a movement, she found herself lifted from the room and placed on the ground beside Yvounet. "There she is," said Frantz, laughing.

"Thanks," said Yvounet ; and he led Gudule to the darkest corner of the rampart. This was the circular top of one of the towers, which was protected by a parapet three feet high. The two Scharfensteins sat down on a stone bench near.

It is not our intention to repeat the conversation of Yvounet and Gudule. They were young, and in love ; they had not seen each other for three days, and in a quarter of an hour much was said. We say a quarter of an hour, for at the end of that time Yvounet laid his hand on the pretty mouth of his companion and listened. He fancied he heard a sound, like the tread of many feet ; and looking, he seemed to see an immense black serpent at the foot of the wall.

But the night was so dark, and the sound so slight, that all might be an illusion. Besides, all at once the movement and the sound ceased. Yvounet could see and hear nothing.

He stood for a few minutes with his arm round Gudule, and his head passed between two of the battlements. Soon he fancied he saw the gigantic serpent raise its head against the wall; then, like a hydra, another head, and then a third appeared.

At once he understood all, and, telling Gudule to be silent, he took her in his arms and gave her to Frantz, who soon replaced her in the room. Then, running back, he arrived at the first ladder just as a Spaniard placed his foot on the parapet.

Thick as was the darkness, a kind of gleam was seen, then a cry resounded, and the Spaniard, struck by Yvounet's sword, fell backwards.

The noise of his fall, however, was lost in that of the second ladder, crowded with men, and pushed backwards by Heinrich's powerful arm.

Frantz had found a huge beam, and, raising it above his head, had let it fall upon the third ladder, which had broken in two, and ladder and men fell pell-mell into the fosse.

Yvounet now cried loudly for help, and the two Scharfensteins, running to him, found him attacked by two or three Spaniards who had gained a footing. One of them fell under the immense sword of Heinrich, another was felled by the club of Frantz, and the third hurled over the rampart.

Immediately after appeared Jean and Guillaume Pequoy, roused by the cries, and soon after other aid arrived, and the attempt was a failure on the part of the Spaniards.

At the same instant, as if different attacks had been planned for the same time, the sound of thousands of arquebuses were heard from the opposite side.

The two attempts, that of the Spaniards to surprise the city, and that of Dandelot to assist it, had both failed.

We have seen how chance worked against the Spaniards; let us now hear how it defeated the French.

CHAPTER XXVII

OF THE DOUBLE ADVANTAGE THAT THERE MAY BE IN SPEAKING THE PATOIS OF PICARDY

IT is now time that we should visit the tents of the besiegers. At the same time that Coligny and his officers were making the tour of the walls, to see what was the state of the defences, another equally important group was going round outside, to find out the best mode of attack. This group was composed of Emmanuel Philibert, Count Egmont, Count Horn, Count Mansfeld, and the Dukes Eric and Ernest of Brunswick. Behind these came other officers, among whom was Scianca-Ferro.

By the orders of Emmanuel, Leona had remained at Cambray. The result of the examination had been that, sheltered by bad walls and with an insufficient garrison and artillery, the town could not hold out more than four or five days, and this message Emmanuel had sent to Philip, who was also at Cambray, which had been an additional reason for leaving Leona there, as it was probable that the generalissimo would have more than once to hold personal communication with his sovereign, as Cambray was but seven leagues from Saint Quentin, and each of these visits would probably give an opportunity of seeing Leona.

Emmanuel's first idea had been that the weak side of Saint Quentin was the Porte d'Isle, and that the slightest neglect on the part of the besieged would give him en-

trance there. He, therefore, leaving the other chiefs to encamp before the side of Rémicourt, had pitched his tent opposite the faubourg, on a little hill which overlooked the Somme, over which he had thrown a bridge, and all that vast space which was to be occupied by the English.

On the night of the 7th of August he had determined to risk an escalade. On the morning of the 6th, a peasant, who had asked to see him, was introduced into his tent. The man was the bearer of a letter that he had taken out of a military doublet, which he had found under his wife's bed.

The doublet belonged to Maldent, and the letter was one of those written by Coligny. Now, how did this doublet come to be under the bed of a peasant in the village of Savoy. That is what we must now relate; the destiny of States often depends upon small accidents.

After having left Yvounet, Maldent had gone on his way. Arrived at Savoy, he had at the corner of a street run against a night patrol. To fly was impossible, he had been seen; besides, it would have excited suspicion, and horsemen would have easily overtaken him; he therefore glided into a doorway.

"Who goes there?" cried a voice.

Maldent knew the manners of Picardy, and that it was very rare for a peasant to lock a door. He lifted the latch, the door opened, and he walked in.

"Is it you, old man?" asked a woman's voice, in a strong Picard *patois*.

"Oh, yes, it is I," replied Maldent, in the same *patois*, for he was a native of Noyon.

"Oh," replied the woman, "I thought you were dead."

"Good; you see I am not," replied Maldent, locking the door and approaching the bed. However rapid had been his movements, one of the patrol had seen him, but with-

out being able to tell precisely through what door he had disappeared ; and as he might be a spy, they were already knocking at the next house, a fact which showed Maldent that he had no time to lose ; but not knowing the localities, he ran against a table covered with pots and glasses.

"What are you about ?" cried the woman ; "how can you be so stupid ?"

Not wishing to be known as a stranger in the house, he thought the best plan was to take the place of the master of the house ; so, slipping off his clothes and hastily pushing them under the bed, he jumped into it.

A few minutes after, the patrol, who had found in the next house only an old woman of sixty and a little girl of nine or ten, knocked at the door of the cottage, determined to find the man who had disappeared so suddenly.

"Ah ! what is that, Gossen ?" cried the hostess.

"I do not know or care," replied he.

"But they will break down the door."

"Let them."

The door soon yielded to the blows of the soldiers, who entered swearing and cursing ; but as they spoke in Spanish, Maldent answered in Picard ; the dialogue became confused, and the soldiers prepared to strike a light, in order to judge better of the situation. This was the critical moment ; so, while the soldiers struck a light, Maldent in a few words informed his hostess of the truth. Her first feeling was hostile, and she cried out—

"Ah ! you are not Gossen ; then get out of this at once."

"But," said Maldent, "I am Gossen, since I am in his bed."

This argument appeared unanswerable, for the woman, after casting a rapid glance at her new husband, by the now lighted candle, murmured—

"One must not desire the death of the sinner," and turned her face to the wall. Maldent also profited by the

light, to look about him. He was in the house of a peasant apparently well off: there was an oak table, a walnut chest of drawers, curtains, and on a chair the Sunday clothes of the true Gossen lay ready for the morrow.

The soldiers also looked around them, but, finding nothing to awaken their suspicion with regard to Maldent, began to converse more quietly among themselves. Maldent, who perfectly understood Spanish, heard all they said.

They wished to take him for a guide from Savoy to Callon. At last the chief, who spoke a little French, approached the bed, and told Maldent to get up. Maldent shook his head.

"I cannot," said he.

"How! cannot?"

"No."

"And why not?"

"Because I have hurt my leg."

"Then we will give you a horse."

"Oh, no, I cannot ride a horse; a donkey, if you like."

"You shall learn."

"Oh, no," cried Maldent, shaking his head again, "I cannot ride on a horse."

"We will see that," said the Spaniard, approaching and raising his whip.

"Oh! yes, I will ride," cried Maldent, jumping out of bed and hopping about on one foot as though he had really hurt the other.

"Very good; now dress quickly."

"Yes, but do not make such a noise; you will disturb my poor Catherine, who is not well." And as he spoke he drew the sheet over Catherine's head. This he did for a purpose of his own, for he intended to put on the clothes of the absent Gossen instead of his own, which were under the bed, and to take which would be sure to reawaken suspicion. As for Catherine, she did not look about her; all she cared about was to see her false husband make off

as quickly as possible. Maldent, on his part, who feared every moment to see the true Gossen appear, made as much haste as possible, and then, taking the candle on pretence of looking for his hat, he let it fall and put out the light.

"Adieu, Catherine," said he, "I must go;" and he limped off, leaning on the arm of a soldier. There was a great job to get him on to the horse; three men had to lift him on the saddle.

Once in the saddle, it was worse. As soon as the horse began to trot, Maldent uttered lamentable cries, and pulled so hard at the bridle, that the poor horse in his turn did all that he could to rid himself of so disagreeable a rider. At last, at the corner of a street, one of the men gave the horse a cut with his whip, and Maldent at the same time leaving the reins loose, the animal set off at full gallop.

Maldent called loudly for help, but before any one could come up with him both horse and rider had disappeared. The comedy had been so well played, that it was not till he was out of sight that the Spaniards began to perceive that they had been duped.

It was thus that Maldent had arrived at La Fère with a soldier's horse and a peasant's dress, and had nearly been hung for it.

Two hours after the departure of the false Gossen the real one arrived. He found the whole village in commotion, and his wife in tears.

She had recounted to every one how a thief had entered her house, and, pistol in hand, had forced her to give him Gossen's clothes, which, no doubt, he required for the purpose of baffling justice, as he must be a great criminal. However great the anger of Gossen was at losing his clothes, he was obliged to console his wife, who was in such grief; but at last the idea struck him of searching the clothes left in place of his own, to discover some clue to the robber. There he found the letter addressed to M. de Montmorency

by the admiral, and hatred had whispered him to take it to Philibert Emmanuel, in the hopes that the constable would think that he had been betrayed by the bearer of the letter. So, in spite of the remonstrances of his wife, who begged him not to trouble himself about it, he set off at daybreak and took the letter to Emmanuel, who did not scruple to open it, and thus discovered that aid had been applied for, and how it was proposed that it should arrive. All day long he remained quiet, giving no signs of suspicion; but imagining that the admiral had doubtless despatched more than one messenger, he sent out men to raise barricades across the roads from Savoy and Ham. Near them he placed in ambush his best arquebusiers.

That night passed over quietly, and then the duke supposed rightly that they would arrive on the following night.

But it was not enough to prevent aid from arriving. Emmanuel thought that, to aid the entrance of the succours, the whole garrison would be assembled at Ponthoille, and that the other points would be left unguarded, particularly the rampart of the Dreux Marché, as all firing had ceased on that side for two days, and he had, therefore, ordered his men to attempt a surprise there.

We have seen what chance defeated that; but, in compensation, the ambush succeeded, most unfortunately for the poor besieged, from whom it took their last hope.

Three times did Dandelot attempt to pass through the wall of fire which separated him from the town, and three times he was repulsed; nor could the besieged come to aid him. At last, decimated by the fire, they dispersed over the country, and Dandelot returned to the constable the next day, with only five or six hundred men, and related his defeat.

The constable said that he would give the Spaniards a lesson, and therefore decided to set off in person, and with all his army—which, however, did not number a fifth of the enemy—and succour Saint Quentin.

It was a terrible blow to the besieged when they heard of the repulse of the promised reinforcements; they were reduced to their own resources, and we know what they were.

Coligny called a council to explain to the mayor and chief magistrates the danger of their situation, and to concert fresh measures. Many people from the environs had, for fear of pillage, taken refuge in Saint Quentin, and among them were two gentlemen of noble birth, De Caulaincourt and d'Ameroale. Coligny begged of them each to raise a banner and to enrol as many men as possible under their orders, to whom he promised a quarter's pay in advance. They consented, and before night had enrolled two hundred and twenty men, tolerably well armed.

During the day they heard drums beating, and had perceived advancing from Cambray a new troop of men, dressed in blue. This was the English army, twelve thousand strong, who had come to join the Duke of Savoy and to complete the blockade. It was commanded by Pembroke, Clinson, and Grey.

They had with them twenty-five cannon — in itself double what the admiral had to distribute over the whole of the ramparts.

The inhabitants beheld this third army with dismay, but the admiral incited them to courage and hope.

The next thing was to find a way by which the constable might send them aid. They decided on the crossing of the Somme by the marsh of Grosnard. These marshes were very dangerous, on account of their turf bogs and holes, and were thought impracticable; but some of the men said that, with fifty men, laden with fascines, they would attempt that night to establish a passage ten feet wide, through the marsh. Maldent was sent with them, and was the bearer of a letter to the constable, describing the locality, and begging him to bring with him flat boats, as he had but four small ones. If they succeeded in

establishing the passage, Maldent would swim across the Somme and thus reach the constable, and, if it were important to bring an answer, would return in the same way.

At two o'clock in the morning the party returned with the intelligence that a way was traced out over which six men could pass abreast.

They had completed their work without molestation—the marsh having been represented to the Duke of Savoy as wholly impassable. Maldent had swam the river and was on his way to La Fère. A hope, although but a faint one, began to dawn again upon the besieged.

By daybreak the admiral was on the ramparts. From where he stood he could overlook the enemy's camp and see their works. They were advancing rapidly, and it was easy to see, from the piles of fresh earth, that their pioneers were at work. The admiral sent for an excellent English engineer, called Lansfort, and asked him what he thought of the enemy's works. He was of opinion that it was the beginning of a mine, but consoled the admiral by telling him that he had himself commenced a counter-mine.

But the Spaniards were engaged on another work, not less formidable—they had begun to cut trenches, which were gradually approaching the town. They were three in number; one menaced the rampart of Rémicourt, one fronted the Tour d'Eau, and the other the Tour Rouge. The admiral could not oppose them for want of men to make sorties. He had but six or seven hundred men, and could not muster more than forty arquebuses. All that he could do was to repair the damage done by the Spaniards as fast as they did it. But, soon, even this became impossible, for the Spaniards unmasked a fresh battery in the course of the day, which swept the whole wall, and no men would venture on it for a long time; until, at last, by promises of double pay, the admiral induced about one hundred men to work.

Meanwhile, Maldent had arrived safe and sound at La Fère; and no sooner did the constable hear of his nephew's distress, and of the passage that had been opened for him, than he resolved to set off without delay. Consequently, an hour after Maldent's arrival, he set off, at the head of two thousand six hundred horse and four thousand foot, and marched towards Essigny le Grand, where he stopped. There, having arranged his army in order of battle, he sent forward three officers to ascertain the position of the Spaniards and to report how far the advanced posts were from the town, while he himself advanced as near as possible to the marsh—that is, to the little town of Guiois.

The three officers returned, confirming Maldent's report, and Maldent was immediately despatched with a letter to Coligny, begging him to hold on, for that he should have aid as soon as possible, and telling him to keep a look-out for it. He accordingly doubled the sentinels on the side on which they would arrive, and got ready a large number of ladders, that some might climb the walls while others entered by the gate.

The constable had resolved to make his attempt openly and in daylight, as darkness had succeeded so badly the first time! he resolved now to trust to courage and open force. He therefore returned to La Fère, assembled all his men and fifteen pieces of cannon, and sent word to Saint André to join him early on the morning of the 10th.

After having delivered his message, Maldent returned to his comrades. He found all smiling and happy except Malemort, who was groaning piteously, for he felt that it would be impossible for him to join in the coming battle, and Maldent's announcement of the approach of the constable brought his despair to a climax.

It was supper time, and, thanks to the numerous resources, their table was certainly better furnished than that of the admiral. The wine, particularly, was delicious;

and they drank to the return of Maldent—to the recovery of Malemort—to the king—to the admiral—to Gudule; and then Maldent proposed the health of Catherine Gossen. Each had proposed a toast but the Scharfensteins, who always drank more and talked less than anyone else. At last, they called on Heinrich for his toast.

"Well!" said he, "I propose the health of that virtuous young man who came to offer us five hundred crowns for that little affair, you know."

"Ah! yes—De Waldeck," said Yvounet. "But we have seen no more of him or his money."

"Never mind," replied Heinrich; "he has passed his word, and a German never breaks it; he will come, be sure."

"I thank you for answering for me," said a voice at the door.

All turned round.

"Gentlemen," said De Waldeck, "here is the two hundred crowns in advance, and you belong to me, body and soul, to-morrow, or rather, to-day—for it is one o'clock in the morning."

And, taking a glass of wine which was filled for him, he also drank to the success of the little affair.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE BATTLE OF SAINT LAURENT

LET us return to the constable.

At seven o'clock on the morning of the 10th, the troops of the Marshal Saint André joined those of the constable. They formed together a body of about nine hundred gendarmes, one thousand light horse, fifteen French and twenty-two German companies of infantry; in all, about

ten thousand men. It was at the head of this small army that the constable prepared to attack sixty thousand men.

The Marshal de Saint André had represented to him the danger he was about to incur, particularly with so active an enemy as the Duke of Savoy, but the constable replied—

“Corbleu! monsieur, you may trust to me to know what is for the good of the state. I learned long ago when to give battle and when to avoid it. Be easy about it.”

It was ten o'clock when they reached Gauchy, but they had time to overthrow two companies of six hundred men, who formed an advanced guard, before they were perceived by the Duke of Savoy.

Arrived there, the French troops found themselves in view of the Spanish army, but the Somme and the marshes lay between them. The whole of the Spanish, English, and Flemish army lay on the right bank of the Somme, but the Faubourg d'Isle was kept only by Julien, Romeron, and Carondelet, and the two companies who had already been surprised. What the constable had now to do was to block into the faubourg the two Spanish captains to place six cannon in front of the path through the marsh—the only practicable passage—and then to send down to Saint Quentin as many men as were necessary, and retire, sacrificing some of his six cannon and, perhaps, one hundred men, who would have sufficed to guard this passage.

He blocked in the companies, but entirely neglected the path, and ordered out the forty boats that he had brought with him. But then it was found that the waggons with the boats had been placed, not in front, but in the rear. Two hours were lost in bringing them up, and then the men rushed in so tumultuously that they were overloaded, and grounded in the mud.

Meanwhile, one of the prisoners taken in the morning

had pointed out to the constable the tent of the Duke of Savoy, and he immediately ordered the gunners to fire upon it, and the movement which immediately took place around it showed that the balls had taken some effect.

However, the boats now began to ascend the stream ; the soldiers burning, as they went along, resinous matter, which created a thick smoke, was the signal agreed on between him and Coligny. At the first notice of the arrival of the constable, Coligny had run to the ramparts, seen the boats filled with men, and had ordered a sortie through the postern Sainte Catherine, which was destined to aid them on disembarking, and at the same time had a large number of ladders brought, ready to facilitate their entering the town.

Just as he was giving his directions, Procope came to him, and reminding the admiral of the engagement between them, asked leave for the day, as the adventurers had a private enterprise in contemplation. It was according to agreement, and therefore the admiral had no reason for refusing. They therefore left the city with Waldeck at their head, fully armed, and with his visor lowered. Soon the boats reached the shore ; but the same haste and disorder which had attended the embarking still prevailed, and without attending to the signs of those sent by the admiral to aid them, they rushed on shore, and sank up to the waist in the mud ; then a frightful tumult ensued : they pushed, some to the right and some to the left, some sinking deeper into the mud, and some straying in the direction of the enemy's camp. Dandelot alone, with about four hundred men, followed the path marked out by the fascines, and obtained dry ground.

Coligny, from where he stood, beheld with despair the succours, so long expected, being diminished and lost, and called uselessly to the men who were struggling by hundreds in the marsh, without any one being able to help them.

However, Dandelot rallied a few of them, and arrived at the postern with five hundred men, fifteen captains, and a few gentlemen who had volunteered to join the expedition. Four artillerymen followed. Next to the sight of his brother, Coligny said that their arrival gave him most pleasure, as he had none but bourgeois artillerymen, who, however brave, were not sufficiently experienced or skillful to be adequate to the wants of a besieged city.

De Waldeck waited quietly until the soldiers were disembarked, and then seized on one of their boats, and, followed by his men, went down the river and landed in a little alder wood which extended itself along one of the banks. Arrived there, he gave each man a Spanish scarf, and ordered them to lie close and concealed, and ready to obey orders.

His plan was easy to understand. Knowing the character of Emmanuel, he did not doubt that he would come out and give battle to the constable, and as uniforms were not worn at that time, he thought that his men might easily mix with his troops and surround him. Once surrounded, we know what De Waldeck wanted.

Emmanuel had just left the table when they came to announce the arrival of the French army on the other side of the Somme, and his tent being on an eminence, he could see them distinctly. He could also see the arrival of Dandelot and his men; but they were out of gunshot, and at the same time a whistling was heard over his head, and a bullet, burying itself at his feet, covered him with sand and pebbles. Emmanuel rushed out of his tent, and at that moment a ball passed right through it. To remain longer there was to expose himself to certain death. He went out, ordering them to bring him his horse and arms, and went to a little chapel on a rising ground, whence he could see that the French army did not extend farther than St Lazare, and that

that village itself was only guarded by a small body of cavalry. These observations made, he came down, armed himself rapidly under the porch of the little chapel, called to him the Counts Horn and Egmont, sent a messenger to the Duc Eric de Brunswick, and to the Count de Mansfeld, to order them to watch the French, and giving them a rendezvous at the quarters of the Marshal Binincourt. A quarter of an hour after, he was at the appointed place himself. Messengers from the Duke of Brunswick, and from Count Mansfeld, were already there with the information that the road to Roucroy was perfectly free, and that the extreme point of the French army did not reach Neuville. Emmanuel immediately ordered two thousand men to mount on horseback, and, putting himself at their head, went along this road, where he ranged them to protect his infantry. All this was perfectly unseen by the French, and fifteen thousand were in position while the constable was still amusing himself with firing on the empty tent. All at once the Duc de Nevers, sent by the constable with the gendarme companies to scour the plain of Neuville, discovered that an immense body of troops, protected by the two thousand horse of the duke, was advancing from the other side, and closing in the army of the constable in a half circle; he set off full gallop to inform the constable what had happened.

The constable then called the Marshal Saint André, and the other chiefs of his army, and announced to them that, content with having furnished Saint Quentin with the necessary reinforcements, he would now retreat as quickly as possible. He therefore wished them all to rally their men and to begin their retreat, avoiding any engagement to which he was not forced.

The French infantry began their retreat, and advanced rapidly, but in good order, towards the wood of Gusoz, which would afford them a shelter against a charge of

cavalry. But it was too late before they reached it; they encountered the Spanish army drawn up in a vast circle. The constable halted, for the numeric superiority of the opposing army gave them no chance of reaching the wood. Then Emmanuel divided his army into three great bodies, intrusted the command of the right wing to Count Egmont, and that of the left to the Dukes of Brunswick, explained to them his plan, enjoined them to make no movement without his orders, and took the command of the centre himself. Between the two armies were all that mass of vivandieres, valets, and rabble, which attached themselves to all armies of the time. Emmanuel ordered his men to fire upon them, and the result was what he expected; a thousand men and women recoiled with loud cries on to the ranks of the constable, who tried to repulse them, which their terror rendered difficult.

Emmanuel saw the confusion into which the French ranks were thrown, and turning to Scianca-Ferro, cried—

“Let Count d’Egmont fall on the French rear guard with his cavalry.”

Scianca-Ferro set off like lightning.

“Now Duke Ernest,” continued he, “while d’Egmont charges the rear guard, you and your brother, with four thousand arquebusiers, attack the head of the column. The centre is my business.”

Emmanuel watched his two messengers to their respective destinations, and then, seeing a movement commence, drew his sword and cried—

“Sound the trumpets; the time has come.”

The Duc de Nevers, who commanded the left of the French army, had to sustain the attack of Count d’Egmont. Attacked in the flank, he turned and faced the enemy, but two accidents hampered his movements. A body of the camp followers, repulsed from the centre of the enemy, rushed upon them like an avalanche, and at the same time a body of English light horse in the pay

of France, wheeled round and joined the Flemish cavalry, with whom they immediately returned and charged the troops of the duke. In spite of the valiant efforts of the duke, who did wonders that day, disorder began to manifest itself. Meanwhile the Dukes of Brunswick, according to their orders, attacked the head of the French column, just as it emerged on the road to Gibercourt. But they, being not subject to any evil chance, stood firm, and continued their march, repulsing the arquebusiers, and thus giving time to the constable and the rest of the army to draw up in battle order in the vast plain which extends between Essigny le Grand, Montescourt, and Gibercourt.

There, feeling that he could go no further, the constable halted again, like a boar forced to turn to bay, and, muttering his paternosters, he re-formed his army in a square, with his cannon in front. They were surrounded, and must either conquer or die. The old soldier did not fear death, and hoped to conquer. Indeed, the French infantry, on which the constable reckoned, showed themselves worthy of their reputation, sustaining the shock of the whole army, while the Germans in the French pay laid down their pikes and asked for quarter.

However, the constable held firm, and his infantry repulsed with incredible intrepidity the charge of the Flemish cavalry. Emmanuel then brought out his cannon to demolish this living rampart, and soon began to make a breach. Then putting himself at the head of a squadron, he charged like a simple captain. The shock was great and decisive; the constable, surrounded on all sides, defended himself with the courage of despair, repeating his prayers as usual, and giving a sword stroke with each, which overthrew a man. Emmanuel saw, recognised and rode towards him, crying—

“Take him alive; it is the constable.”

It was but just in time, for the constable had received a

wound with a pike ; but Scianca-Ferro hearing the duke's words, now placed himself before him as a rampart, crying to him to surrender, as resistance was now useless.

The constable gave up his poignard, declaring that he would yield his sword only to the duke himself : Emmanuel advanced and received it.

The battle was now gained, but not over ; they continued to fight for some time, and vast numbers of the French were killed. Among these was the Duc d'Enghien, the Vicomte de Turenne, and eight hundred gentlemen, who were left dead on the field. Among the prisoners were the Duc de Montpensier, the Marshal Saint André, and the Duc de Bouillon.

The Duc de Nevers, the Prince de Condé, and the eldest son of the constable got back to La Fère. Then the Sieur de Bordillon joined them, with him two pieces of cannon which had escaped capture at this great battle, in which France, out of eleven thousand men, lost six thousand killed, three thousand prisoners, sixty flags, and all the baggage, tents, and provisions. There did not remain ten thousand men to keep the enemy out of Paris. Emmanuel gave his troops the order to regain the camp, and was himself accompanied by a few officers, riding along the road from Cosigny to Saint Lazare, when some men came out of the mill of Gauchy and mingled with his escort. For some time they went on in silence, but suddenly, just as they were passing a little wood, whose thick shade redoubled the darkness, the duke's horse uttered a loud neigh, gave a leap, and fell. Then a noise, like the clash of steel, was heard, and a voice crying, "Down with the Duke Emmanuel."

But scarcely were the words uttered, when Scianca-Ferro, overturning friends and foes in his hurry, and crying out, "Here I come, brother Emmanuel," rushed towards the duke. Emmanuel had no need of any encouragement, and, thrown from his horse as he was, had seized one of the

aggressors and made a buckler of him. The horse, also, kicked furiously, and overturned another. Meanwhile Scianca continued to cry, "Help for the duke!" And every gentleman rushed forward, striking at he knew not whom.

Suddenly they heard the gallop of about twenty horses, and he saw, by the approaching lights, that their riders bore torches.

At this sight two men on horseback galloped off, while two others on foot rushed into the wood, and all resistance ceased. In a few seconds the torches lighted up this new battle field. The first thought was for the duke; but his wounds were very slight, the person whom he held in his arms having received most of those intended for him, and being now perfectly unconscious from a blow of Scianca's club. As for the three men stretched on the ground, and who seemed dead or dying, no one knew them. He whom the duke held wore a helmet with the visor down. They unfastened it, and displayed the pale face of a young man about twenty-five. His red hair and beard were covered with blood, but the duke and Scianca both recognised him, and exchanged a glance. "Ah! serpent, it is you," said Scianca. "See, Emmanuel, he has but fainted; shall I put an end to him?"

But Emmanuel drew the unconscious man from the arms of his squire, and, leaning him against a tree, laid his helmet by his side. "Gentlemen," said he, "God alone can judge between me and that young man, and he has declared for me. Scianca, I pray you let him live: the father was enough." Then, remounting his horse, "Gentlemen," said he, "I wish that the battle, fought to-day so gloriously for us, should be called the battle of Saint Laurent, in memory of the day on which it took place."

They then all returned to the camp

CHAPTER XXIX

HOW THE ADMIRAL RECEIVED THE NEWS OF THE
BATTLE

THE blow was terrible, and struck cruelly at the heart of France, while it rejoiced their great enemy Philip the Second. The battle took place on the 10th, and on the 12th the king joined Emmanuel at the camp. The duke, who had yielded to the English army all the ground between the Somme and the Chapel d'Eparguemaille, had now pitched his camp in front of the rampart of Rémicourt, where he determined to carry on the siege, if, contrary to all expectation, they continued to hold out after the news of the defeat. Philip reached the camp about twelve in the morning, and Emmanuel came outside to receive him, and was going to kiss his hand, according to etiquette; but Philip cried, "No, cousin; I should rather kiss yours, who have gained for me so great and glorious a victory, which has cost us so little bloodshed." Indeed, the chroniclers of the time say that the Spanish lost only sixty-five men, and the Flemings fifteen men; while the English were never called into action. As for the French corpses, they covered the whole plain between Essigny and Gibercourt. It was so pitiful a spectacle, that Catherine de Laillier, mother of the Sieur de Gibercourt, had a field consecrated, and immense pits dug in it, to which she had the bodies brought for burial.

King Philip then reviewed his prisoners, and afterwards they planted along the trench the French flags taken in the battle, and fired cannon as a sign of joy.

Let us now return to Saint Quentin.

The admiral had heard the firing all day in the direction of Gibercourt, but did not know the result of the battle.

About one o'clock in the morning he was informed that three men had arrived with news; they were instantly admitted, and proved to be Yvounet and the two Scharfensteins. Yvounet was the spokesman, and told all he knew, namely, that the battle was lost, and that there were a large number killed and made prisoners; he knew no names, but had heard that the constable was wounded and taken prisoner. The admiral asked them how they came to mingle in the battle, of which there seemed no doubt, as Yvounet had a wound in his left arm, Heinrich a cut right across his face, while Frantz was lame from the kick of a horse, and begged them to keep the defeat secret as long as possible. The three then returned to their tent, where they found Malemort a prey to a frightful nightmare. He dreamed that he saw his friends fighting, but that, up to the waist in a bog, he could not free himself to join them. When they awoke him his distress was still greater, as he heard of all that had been passing without him.

At five in the evening Maldent returned. He had been left for dead, but having only fainted, had recovered. He could tell no more about the battle than the others. The next night Pilletrousse arrived. He was one of those who had escaped into the wood, and as he spoke good Spanish and wore a Spanish scarf, he had joined himself to a band sent by Emmanuel to seek among the dead for the Duc de Nevers, who had exposed himself so much that every one felt sure that he must be dead, and they had wandered about all day, turning over the dead bodies.

It may be imagined that they did not leave them without plundering them, so that Pilletrousse returned without a wound, and with his pockets full. He was taken to the admiral, and furnished him with full particulars as to the dead and the prisoners.

About daybreak, some one came to tell the Jacobins that one of their number was being brought home dead on a bier, by two peasants. The Spaniards had not felt

any wish to stop a dead body from entering the town, and had allowed it to pass. The worthy brothers surrounded the bier, wondering who could be lying there, when they heard a voice from the coffin, crying, "It is I, dear brothers, your unworthy captain, Lactance. Open quickly, for I stifle." Some were greatly terrified, but others more brave understood that it had been a ruse to re-enter the town, and they opened it at once. Lactance jumped out, knelt down and gave thanks for his return, and then related to them how, after an unlucky expedition, he had taken refuge with some worthy peasants, but they, fearing discovery by the Spaniards, God had inspired him with the idea of being placed in a coffin and brought in as a dead body. The good monks, glad to recover their captain, willingly gave two crowns to the bearers. But from Lactance, who had received no recommendation to secrecy, the news of the defeat spread through the convent, and from the convent to the town.

About eleven the next morning Procope was announced to the admiral. He brought a letter from the constable. How this happened, we will relate. Procope had presented himself at the Spanish camp, representing himself as servant to the constable, and asking to be allowed to join his master, which was granted. He made the constable understand by a glance, that he had something to say to him, and as soon as all others were dismissed, and they were alone, "Well, fellow," cried he, "have you anything to say to me? Be quick, or I will give you up to the duke as a spy, and he will hang you."

Then Procope related a long story; how the admiral, having full confidence in him, had sent him to the constable to get news, and that he might confide to him a message, verbal or written, and he would find means to re-enter the city. M. de Montmorency had no message but to beg his nephew to hold out as long as possible.

"Give me the message in writing," said Procope.

"But, fellow, if they catch you with such a letter, do you know what will happen to you?"

"I shall be hung," said Procopé; "but never fear, I shall not let myself be taken."

Reflecting that after all it was Procopé's business and not his, the constable wrote the letter, which Procopé concealed within the lining of his doublet. He then furbished up the constable's helmet, cuirass, and all his armour, and then waited patiently for a favourable opportunity to return to the city. On the 12th an occasion presented itself. Philip arrived at the camp, which caused so great a commotion that he escaped unnoticed, and presented himself at the gates of the city. He gave Coligny his uncle's letter, showed him the tent of the duke, and told him that the king was there at that moment, which was confirmed by the hoisting of the royal standard. Coligny then conceived the idea of replying to all their rejoicings by cannon, and if the ball went three feet over the king's head, it was certainly not intentional on the part of those who pointed it. The admiral then gave ten crowns to Procopé, who rejoined his companions. As for the poet Fracasso, they expected him in vain: he never reappeared. Some peasants declared they had seen the body of a man hanging on a tree, near where the attack on the duke took place, and this they supposed to be poor Fracasso.

CHAPTER XXX

THE ASSAULT

As the victory of Saint Laurent did not make Saint Quentin surrender, it was evident that the garrison were determined to hold out to the last extremity. It was

therefore resolved to press on the attack. They had already been ten days before the town, and it was a long time to lose before such poor walls. They must finish as quickly as possible with these insolent bourgeois, who dared to hold out when they had no longer the hope of succour, and could only look forward to the horrors of a town taken by assault.

The news of the defeat soon spread in spite of the admiral's care, but strangely enough he confesses himself that it had more effect on the soldiers than on the bourgeois.

The great difficulty was to get workmen to repair the ravages of the cannon. These were most severe on the rampart of Rémicourt, which since the arrival of the English army, was no longer tenable. Two batteries had been established, which swept the whole rampart from the Porte d'Isle to the Tour Rouge; so that the workmen dared no longer approach it. At last an idea struck Dandelot; he directed them at nightfall to go down to the Somme and collect as many as possible of the boats that had been abandoned there, and have them carried to the rampart, laid across, and filled with earth. Five were brought the first night, and behind these the men worked.

The admiral had the paving stones taken up from the streets and carried to the towers, whence he had them hurled down on the Spanish trenches, but the miners being greatly protected by the gabions, were able to continue their work of destruction.

However, it took nine days to finish the works; so many days gained for the King of France. On the 22nd everything was ready for action, and the Quentinois could judge of the danger of their situation. The whole of the space between the Tour à l'Eau and the Tour Saint Jean was occupied by an immense battery of fifty cannon. On the other side the Flemish batteries had resumed their

fire, while the English divided into two parties, aided on one side by the Spanish batteries of Carondelet and Julien Romeron, and on the other, launched their bullets against the Faubourg de Pointpoille and the tower of Sainte Catherine. St Quentin was completely enveloped in a circle of fire.

Unfortunately, the old wall of Rémicourt, which was the point most fiercely attacked, offered but a feeble resistance; at each new volley the whole wall trembled, and the bastion at length fell. Saint Quentin looked like the salamander enveloped in flames; each ball carried away a piece of wall, or shook a house to its foundations, and the Quartiers d'Isle and Rémicourt presented only a vast ruin. They attempted at first to prop up the houses, but scarcely had they done so to one, when the next fell, dragging both down together. The inhabitants of these two devoted quarters gradually retired to the Quartier Saint Thomas, which was the least exposed to the fire, although some clung to their falling walls until they were actually burned in the ruins.

And yet, amidst all this havoc and desolation, no voice spoke of surrender. Every one felt that they had a sacred mission, and seemed to say, "We shall fall, town, houses, ramparts, citizens, and soldiers, but in falling we shall save France."

On the 26th, the rampart was a mass of stone, in which eleven large breaches had been made. All at once, about two in the afternoon, the firing ceased, and a dead silence succeeded to the frightful cannonade that had continued for ninety-six hours; and the assailants were seen approaching in numbers through the covered ways.

They believed that the moment for assault had arrived. But it was not for that day: they were only working still farther at their mines. The evening and night were employed in repairing the breaches as much as possible.

On the morning of the 27th, the cannon began to play once more, and the work of the night was destroyed. There were eleven breaches; the first, in the Tour Saint Jean, was guarded by the Comte de Breuil, governor of the town; the second was guarded by the Scotch company under Comte Haran, some of the most indefatigable soldiers in the garrison; the third by the company Dauphin; the fourth by Saint André and Lactance and his Jacobins, being only fifty feet from the convent. The fifth was guarded by Coligny himself, having with him Yvounet, Maldent, and Procope; the sixth by a company under Captain Rambouillet, and to this Pilletrousse was joined; the seventh by Captain Samac, who, though ill in bed, had himself carried to the rampart on a mattress. The eighth, by three other captains, called Force, Ozer and Soliel; the ninth by Dandelot, with thirty-five men arms and thirty arquebusiers; the tenth by Captain Lignieres and his company; and the eleventh by the company la Fayette, to which was joined the two Scharfensteins and Malemort.

The whole of these soldiers amounted to about eight hundred, and the bourgeois with them to about double the number.

On the 27th, as we have said, the cannon recommenced firing, and played incessantly till about two o'clock in the afternoon. It was useless to reply to such a fire, which destroyed the ramparts and the houses, and killed the townspeople in the most retired streets. They were therefore obliged to wait; but the crier went about incessantly ringing and calling out, "To arms! citizens, to arms!" At two o'clock the firing ceased, and a flag was raised as a signal for the assault.

Three attacks were made, one towards the convent of the Jacobins, the other towards the Tour à l'Eau, and the third towards the Porte d'Isle. The first body was composed of the old Spanish bands, led by Alonzo de Lazieres,

and of fifteen hundred Germans under their Colonel, Lazare Swendy; the next by a band of six Spanish battalions, under Colonel Navarez and six hundred Walloons; and the third was led by Carondelet and Julien Romeron, to whom were joined two thousand English.

For a quarter of an hour there was a frightful *mêlée*; nothing but cries and oaths were to be heard. Every one did marvels; the three attacked points were most vigorously defended. Lactance and his Jacobins had done well; the enemy had been repulsed from the Tour Rouge, but more than twenty monks lay among the dead. The body who attacked the Tour à l'Eau were not more fortunate; they were driven back to the trenches, where they re-formed for a second assault. At the Tour d'Isle, Carondelet had his hand broken by a shot from Malemort, while Julien Romeron, thrown from the top of the ramparts by Heinrich Scharfenstein, had both his legs broken by the fall.

There was a momentary pause, and then all the columns re-formed for attack, having received reinforcements. What made the defence more sublime, was that chief, soldiers, and bourgeois knew well that it was useless, and could not have a successful result; but it was a duty to accomplish, and each one fulfilled it nobly.

Nothing could be more terrible than the second attack, which was accompanied neither by trumpet nor drum; but both parties met in silence, and the only sound heard was the clash of steel. The breach that he guarded not being attacked, Coligny could watch the combat, or go where he believed his presence to be most needed. He saw now that a group of Spaniards having dislodged the arquebusiers from Tour Rouge, had advanced along the parapet of the rampart, and were gliding into the tower itself.

Coligny was not at first uneasy at this; the way they had to go was so narrow and so difficult, that if the company

of the Dauphin did their duty, they would be easily repulsed; but to his great astonishment, the Spaniards succeeded without any one appearing to interfere with them.

All at once, a soldier came rushing to announce to Coligny that the breach of the Tour Rouge was forced. It was impossible for the admiral to see that point from where he stood, but feeling that where the enemy were becoming victorious was where he was most needed, he called to him five or six men, and crying as he went, "Help, my friends!" he ran as fast as he could towards the tower. But he was not more than half way there, when he saw some of the company Dauphin flying towards the Jacobins, who on their part stood firm and died without retreating. Coligny ran on, but before he reached the place, the rampart was taken, and he rushed full into a Spanish column who were already masters of the wall. The admiral looked round him; a young page, almost a child, and one gentleman and his valet, were all that had accompanied him. At that moment two men attacked him at once; the admiral defended himself, but the little page cried out in Spanish—

"Do not kill Monseigneur de Coligny."

"Are you indeed the admiral?" said one man.

"If he is, he belongs to me," cried the other. And he held out his hand to seize Coligny. But he, striking his hand with the handle of his pike, said, "There is no need to touch me; I surrender, and with God's help will find for my ransom a sum of money which will content you both."

The two soldiers then exchanged a few words, seemingly of concord, for they then turned round and asked who the others were.

"One is my page, the second my valet, and the third a gentleman of my house," replied the admiral; "their ransom will be paid with mine, but take us out of the

way of the Germans: I do not desire to have anything to do with them."

"Follow us," said the two soldiers, "and we will put you in a place of safety."

They then led them into the fosse at the entrance of a mine. There they met Don Alonzo de Cazères, with whom the soldiers exchanged some words. Then Don Alonzo approached Coligny, bowed courteously to him, and pointing to a group of gentlemen, said, "There is our Duke Emmanuel; if you have any request to make, address yourself to him."

"I have nothing to say to him, but that, as I am prisoner to brave men, I wish them to receive my ransom."

Emmanuel heard, and said in French, with a smile, "Monsieur de Coligny, if our prisoner is paid for according to his value, those two fellows will be richer than some princes of my acquaintance."

Then leaving the admiral in the hands of Don Alonzo, Emmanuel mounted the rampart by the breach.

CHAPTER XXXI

A FUGITIVE

THE inhabitants of Saint Quentin knew well what a desperate game they had played, in opposing the triple armies, and they never thought of asking for mercy. It was the nature of wars at that time to bring in their train frightful reprisals; in those armies, composed of men of all countries, and where mercenaries of the same nation often fought against each other, and when money engagements were often badly kept, pillage was reckoned as part of the pay, and indeed often the whole of it.

The defence had been desperate everywhere, except at

the point where the company Dauphin had given way. The enemy already occupied the Tour Rouge, the admiral was taken, and Emmanuel on the ramparts, yet they still fought, not to save the city but to kill and be killed. Even when the Spaniards forced their way into the town, they found groups of armed bourgeois defending the streets. However, at the cries of "The city is taken!" and at the sight of flames, these last struggles ceased, and the breaches were forced one after the other—M. Dandelot's last. As each was taken, loud cries were heard, succeeded by a mournful silence; the cries were cries of victory, and the silence that of death. The breach forced, its defenders murdered or received to ransom if they fancied them rich enough, the troops rushed into the town, and the pillage commenced. It lasted five days, and during that time every species of horror and cruelty was committed. No one was spared, neither women, nor children, old men, monks, or nuns. With a pity for the buildings which he had not for the human beings, Philip had given orders to respect all sacred buildings, but the order was useless, nothing could stop the destruction. The church of Saint Reine was utterly destroyed, the collegiate pierced through by bullets, and robbed of its magnificent stained glass windows, its silver vases and chandeliers; and every large building in the town was a mass of ruins by the end of the five days.

Some of the unfortunate people took refuge in caves and cellars; others had glided down the walls in a last hope of escaping, but most of these had fallen under the Spanish balls or English arrows. However, as night came, the sound of firing ceased, and soon after dark a movement was heard in the rushes on the banks of the Somme, but so slight was it that no one could have distinguished, at ten feet off, whether it were caused by the wind or by the movement of any body. A few seconds afterwards a black object was seen for a moment on the

river, but which immediately disappeared. Two or three times the same object appeared again at intervals, following the course of the stream, but never approaching the banks. At last the swimmer (for, as he left the city further and further behind him, the individual whom we are following appeared less and less to fear showing that he belonged to that class of animal which has declared itself to be the noblest) struck off to the left, and landed on that bank, just at a place where the shade of a group of willows rendered the darkness thicker than in more open spots.

One moment he stopped, held his breath, and, remaining as mute and motionless as the trunk against which he leaned, he looked all round him with senses sharpened by danger. All seemed silent and tranquil; the city alone wrapped in smoke, from which jets of flame frequently issued, seemed to be in its last agony. The fugitive appeared to look with much regret upon a town where doubtless he had ties of love and friendship. He uttered a sigh, murmured a name, and then, after feeling that his poignard, his only arms (and which hung from a chain which by night at all events looked like gold) was safe, he ran towards the marsh of Abbretta. For any one who did not know the place, the path was dangerous enough, from the bogs and marshes, but the fugitive knew his road well, and never deviated from the solid path; he crossed the marsh and found himself on the plain which extends from Abbretta to Canchy, and which, when covered with corn, presents in the wind the appearance of an agitated sea.

He ran on for about a quarter of an hour, and then stopped, looking and listening intently. About one hundred feet off stood the mill of Canchy, looking in the darkness double its usual size. But it was not this which arrested his attention; it was the sound of horses' feet, and the sudden appearance of a black mass drawing

nearer and nearer towards him. There could be no doubt it was a Spanish patrol. The fugitive looked round him. He was just in the place where the attack of De Waldeck upon Emmanuel had taken place. On the left was the little wood into which two of the adventurers had fled, and into this the fugitive rushed, and found himself completely hidden. It was time, for the horsemen passed within fifteen feet of him as he lay there with his face to the ground, motionless and silent. A few Spanish words, pronounced as they passed, left him no doubt as to who they were.

When they had passed he got up, passed his delicate hand through his hair, and leaned against a tree to rest and recover himself, when he felt something touch his hair. Curious to know what this could be, he looked round him, but the darkness was so intense that he could see nothing. He put up his hand to feel, then, forgetting all danger, he uttered a cry and rushed from the wood. What had touched him was a foot, the foot of a man hung from a tree.

It is needless to say that this was our old friend Fracasso.

CHAPTER XXXII

TWO FUGITIVES

A STAG chased by the hounds could not have rushed away more quickly than did the young man of whom we have been writing, who seemed to have a nervous dread of men when they are hung, although certainly most of them are less to be feared after they are hung than before. The only care that he took as he ran was to turn his back on Saint Quentin, and his only desire to get away as far as possible. The fugitive in consequence

sustained for three quarters of an hour a course which a professional runner would have deemed impossible, and accomplished in that time about two leagues, which brought him beyond Essigny le Grand. There his breath failed him, and he lay down full length on a little hillock, panting like a stag at bay. Doubtless he had passed the farthest Spanish outposts, and as for the dead man, even if he had got down from his tree, he would not have waited three quarters of an hour to seize hold of him; besides, supposing it to be Fracasso, he must certainly have hung there for at least twenty days, and the position was not so agreeable that he should have voluntarily remained there if he could help it.

As our friend lay thus, abandoning himself to these and similar reflections, a quarter to twelve struck on the clock of Gibercourt, and the moon rose behind the woods of Rémigny, so that he could look around him and see clearly where he was.

He was on the field of battle, just in the midst of the cemetery, improvised by Catherine de Laillier, and the little hillock on which he rested was a mound, under which twenty soldiers lay. However, as it appears that corpses buried three feet below the ground are less terrifying than those which hang three feet above, our fugitive contented himself this time with a nervous shiver, and lay listening to the mournful cry of the owl.

Suddenly, however, he frowned and turned his head in a listening attitude. Another sound had struck upon his ear—that of the distant gallop of a horse. He stood up and looked at the horizon. As the road was thickly covered with dust, the sound had not reached him until the horse and his rider were tolerably near, and he clearly saw them by the moonlight about five hundred feet off, and directly in his road. He threw a rapid glance behind him, and, at three hundred feet saw, like a dark curtain, the wood of Rémigny, and to this he directed his steps

with fresh vigour ; but, as he started, he heard behind him what seemed to be a cry of joy. This only spurred him on to fresh activity, and as the noise of his flight startled the owl, which took to its wings, he envied its rapid and silent course, which carried it so quickly into the shade of the wood. But if the fugitive had not the wings of the owl, the horse of his pursuer seemed to possess them, and followed him with frightful rapidity. The horse neighed, and the man called. Had the fugitive been less terrified, he would have heard the word "Stop !" pronounced in every tone, from that of prayer to that of menace ; but he only redoubled his efforts to reach the wood, and the rider his to catch him. At last, with extended arms, throbbing temples, ringing ears, and a cloud over his eyes, he found himself about twenty feet from the wood ; but, alas ! the rider was ten feet from him. He tried to rush on, but he heard a growling as of thunder behind him, felt a shock, and rolled over half fainting. Then he saw the rider jump down, felt him raise him up, sustain him, look at him by the moonlight, and then heard him cry—

"By the soul of Luther, it is Yvounet !"

At these words, Yvounet, making an immense effort, fixed his haggard eyes upon the speaker, and, in a half-expiring voice, murmured—

"By the soul of the Pope, it is Monseigneur Dandelot !"

We have followed Yvounet's flight ; we must now see why Dandelot was pursuing him, and, for this purpose, we must go back to the moment when Emmanuel put his foot on the rampart of Saint Quentin.



CHAPTER XXXIII

ADVENTURER AND CAPTAIN

WE said before that Maldent, Yvounet, and Procope were stationed at the same breach as Coligny, and that this was never attacked.

When the town was taken, our adventurers judged that their task was at an end, and each fled in any direction that he thought safest. Yvounet's first idea was to offer the protection of his sword to his friend Gudule Peuyuoy, but, doubtless, he reflected that however formidable his arms might be, they would not be of much service in this case, and that the young girl's own beauty and grace would be a better protection to her than his sword. Besides, he knew that her father and uncle had a hiding place which they considered perfectly secure, and in which they had placed ten days' provisions. Now, it was probable that, by that time, order would be re-established, and then Gudule could come forth in safety. But Yvounet himself felt little inclination to be buried for ten days, and preferred taking his chance of safety in flight. He therefore threw away his sword and cuirass, climbed the rampart at a deserted point, and threw himself into the fosse, scarcely noticed by the sentinels, whose attention was diverted by the cries from the city. Many others had had the same idea, but all attempted to fly immediately instead of waiting for night, and, in so doing, met with instant death. Two or three corpses had fallen backwards in the fosse and were floating down with the stream towards the Somme. This gave our young adventurer an idea, which was to play the corpse, and, holding himself stiff and motionless, to let himself float along with them, and in this way he reached the clump of reeds, where he lay

hidden until the darkness permitted him to attempt his escape, as we have seen.

We must now return to Dandelot.

He, although a general, had been fighting like the commonest soldier in the army. At last, a dozen men threw themselves on him, made him prisoner and carried him off, without having an idea of his rank. When taken to the camp, the admiral had, without explaining their relationship, bargained for his ransom for one thousand crowns, to be paid along with his own. But to Emmanuel it was impossible to hide his rank, and therefore, although he invited him to supper with his brother and the constable, he gave orders that he should be watched with as much care as they were. At the supper, which was prolonged till half-past ten, they were treated with the greatest courtesy, and Emmanuel did his best to make all forget that they were at the table of their conqueror. At half-past ten they left, and retired to tents, which had been prepared for them in the very centre of the camp, within an inclosure of palisades, to which there was but a small entrance, guarded by two sentinels. Besides this, a circle of sentinels guarded the palisades.

Often, during the long nights of the siege, Dandelot had, from the top of the wall, watched the gigantic camp at his feet. He knew the position of each chief, the space between the different bodies, and the whole nature of the ground. Ever since he had been a prisoner, which was not long, as we know, his whole mind had been full of the idea of escape. He was bound by no promise—he had not surrendered—he had been taken, and his determination was fixed to make the attempt as soon as possible. Therefore, when he left the tent of Emmanuel to return to his own, he looked earnestly around him to discover anything that might assist him.

An officer was to be sent to Cambray to announce the taking of the city and to carry the list of prisoners. This

list had been augmented during supper, and the officer, after the guest had left Emmanuel, came to him that he might add the names. His horse, one of the swiftest of the prince's stables, stood about ten feet off, held by a groom.

Dandelot approached the animal, seeming to admire it, then, with one bound, justifying his reputation as the best rider in the French army, jumped into the saddle, dashed his spurs into the horse's sides, overthrew the groom, and galloped off. The groom cried out as soon as he could, but Dandelot was already some way off. He passed like an arrow before the tent of the Comte de Megue, and the sentinel took aim at him, but his gun missed fire. Another fired, but missed him; five or six tried to bar his way with halberds, but he overthrew or leaped over them, reached the Somme, and rushed into the river, and, though the bullets flew around him, they did nothing but carry away his hat—so that both he and his horse reached the other bank in safety. Arrived there, he felt that the best part of his work was over. He did not know the country, but he knew the direction of the principal villages near Saint Quentin, and he rode straight on towards Essigny-le-Grand. He rode on for some time, and then he fancied he saw a human being; and, desirous to know exactly where he was, had called out to him. But the figure had seemed as anxious to escape as he was to reach him. The rest we know: how, when Yvounet was within twenty feet of the wood, he was actually knocked over by Dandelot's horse, and the two recognised each other.

CHAPTER XXXIV

COMPIÈGNE

THE news of the loss of the battle of Saint Quentin had fallen on France like a clap of thunder, and never had the constable stood in greater need of the constant support of Diane de Poitiers to prevent him from losing the king's favour entirely. Indeed, the blow was terrible; one half of the nobility were occupied with the Duc de Guise in the conquest of Naples, and the other half were annihilated. A few gentlemen, most of them wounded, had escaped and rallied round the Duc de Nevers, who had himself been wounded in the thigh, and that was all that was left from the great butchery.

Four or five poor villages, scarcely protected by ramparts out of condition, badly victualled and garrisoned—Ham, La Fère, Laon, La Catelet, and, in the midst of them, Saint Quentin—three armies arrayed against them, Spanish, Flemish, and English, the last of which was perfectly fresh and anxious to march on Paris. A king, isolated, without personal genius; brave, but brave as an individual, capable of being an excellent soldier, but a poor general; his only counsellors the Cardinal de Guise and Catherine de Medicis. Such was the condition of France. And all felt that this ill news was but the forerunner of other not less terrible—the taking of Saint Quentin and the march to Paris of the triple army.

The king's first act was to order secret preparations for a retreat to Orleans, that old fortress of France.

The queen, the three princes, the little princess, and all the ladies of the court were to hold themselves ready to set out, night or day, at the first order given. As for the king, he proposed to go and rejoin the remains of the

army, anywhere where it might be, and fight with them to the last. All was arranged for the dauphin to succeed, in case of his death, with Catherine de Medicis for regent, and the Cardinal de Lorraine for adviser.

Messengers were despatched to the Duc de Guise to hasten his return, with all he could collect of the army of Italy. These measures taken, Henri the Second waited anxiously. He heard that, contrary to all expectation, Saint Quentin still held out, and that fifteen thousand men had fallen before the walls of the heroic town, struggling, with its four or five hundred soldiers, against that immense army. They heard also that Dandelot had managed to get in with his little reinforcement. The danger still existed, but it was less imminent; all the hope of France rested for the time upon Saint Quentin.

Henri prayed to Heaven that the city might hold out for eight days longer, and, accompanied by Catherine de Medicis, set off for Compiègne, which was only a few leagues from the seat of war.

In case of need, the king would join the army, if one still existed, and the queen would return to Saint Germain to direct the retreat.

Having installed himself in the château, and sent out men to the neighbourhood of Saint Quentin to find out the condition of the place, and Laon to inquire what had become of the army, they returned, saying that Saint Quentin still held out, and that all that remained of the army, some two or three thousand men, was at Laon with the Duc de Nevers.

M. de Nevers knew the length of that war of sieges which the Spaniards would probably begin after the fall of Saint Quentin, and despatched bodies of troops to all the neighbouring towns likely to be attacked, he himself remaining at Laon with the rest, where the king was to join him with any fresh troops that could be levied.

Towards the close of the day a heavy chariot stopped at

the door of the Château de Compiègne, without having awakened any curiosity in passing through the town. A man about forty years of age, with an almost African complexion, black beard, and hollow eyes, and a lady about thirty-six, with white skin, piercing eyes, and superb teeth, got out, followed by three or four officers. The porter looked at them in astonishment as he muttered, "The king! the queen!" but was told to keep silent.

The next day the inhabitants of Compiègne learned that the king and queen had arrived the night before, sadly and quietly. They flocked round the château with loud cries of "Vive le roi!" "Vive la reine!" for Henri was loved, and Catherine not yet hated. The king and queen came out on the balcony.

"My friends," said the king, "I came here to be myself the defender of France. I hope that the enemy will not come here; but in any case, let all prepare for defence, as the brave Quentinois have done. Whoever shall have news to bring, either good or bad, of the besieged city, will be welcome at the château."

Then the windows closed, and the king appeared no more, and each one did his best to prepare for defence. The king remained at the château, sad and gloomy, spending most of his time on a tower, whence he could see the road to Saint Quentin, and fancying every person whom he saw approaching to be the expected messenger. The king had arrived on the 15th of August, and days passed on, and all they knew was that Saint Quentin still held out.

On the 24th, Henri was walking in the park, when a distant sound made him start; it was the roar of artillery. For three days it continued, from the early morning till late at night; then on the 27th, at two in the afternoon, it stopped. What had happened? what did the silence mean? Had Saint Quentin really fallen? He waited till nine o'clock in the evening, then, unable to restrain his anxiety, he sent off two or three couriers, with orders to

take different routes, so that if one fell into the hands of the enemy, another might escape.

Till midnight the king wandered in the park ; then he returned to the château, vainly seeking for sleep, and by daybreak was again at his post of observation. Scarcely had he reached it, when, on the road so long watched, he saw, raising the dust which glittered in the first rays of the sun, a horse carrying two riders.

Henri had no doubt that these were messengers from Saint Quentin, and sent at once to have the gates opened for them. A quarter of an hour after, the horse stopped at the gate of the château, and the king uttered a cry of joy on recognising Dandelot. Behind him was Yvounet, who had served him as guide.

The horse might perhaps have preferred a different arrangement, but he was a noble animal, full of fire and courage, and had taken but three hours and a half to accomplish the distance from Gibercourt to Compiègne, nearly eleven leagues.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE PARISIANS

THE news brought by the two messengers was of the kind that is easily told, but always much talked over. The king soon learned all that there was to tell : the city was taken ; the two greatest generals of France, in the absence of the Duc de Guise, were prisoners, and it was still doubtful whether the victorious army would march direct on Paris, or stay to subdue the intermediate towns. The former plan was more likely to be advocated by the bold genius of Emmanuel Philibert, and the latter by the timid and cautious one of the king.

It was decided that, after taking a little repose, each of

the new comers should set off again, Dandelot to accompany the queen to Paris, where she was to make an appeal to the patriotism of the bourgeois, and Yvounet to Laon, to carry letters to the Duc de Nevers, and then to wander as a spy round the Spanish camp and endeavour to ascertain their intentions.

It was very likely that any one engaged on so perilous a mission would be taken and hung; but this idea, which would have made Yvounet shudder the night before, had no effect upon him in broad daylight.

M. Dandelot was also authorised to treat with the Cardinal de Lorraine, who had the management of the finances for the money of which he and his brother had need. Yvounet received once more twenty golden crowns, and leave to take any horse that he pleased from the stables.

At ten o'clock in the morning the two set off, one eastward and the other westward. We shall follow Dandelot, who proceeded with the queen to Paris as fast as the heavy carriage could go. The terror was perhaps greater in Paris than at Compiègne; everywhere was to be seen carriages filled with people and carts full of furniture, men on horseback, and every description of vehicle, leaving Paris. Dandelot and the queen now brought additional bad news, and much would depend on the way in which it was received and told.

"My friends," said Dandelot, addressing the first group of bourgeois he met with, "glory to the inhabitants of Saint Quentin. They have held out nearly a month in a place where the bravest would have hesitated to promise a week, and by this resistance have given Monsieur de Nevers time to reassemble an army, to which the king is constantly sending new reinforcements; and here is her majesty Queen Catherine, who comes among you to make an appeal to your patriotism and to your love for your king."

At these words the queen put her head out of the carriage window, saying—

"Yes, my good friends, it is I who come in the name of your king to announce to you that all the towns are willing to do their best, as Saint Quentin has done. Illuminate, then, in token of the confidence which the king has in you, and the love that you bear him. And this evening I will consult with your magistrates, and with Monsieur de Lorraine and Monsieur de Dandelot, on the best measures to be taken to repulse the enemy, already discouraged by the length of the siege of the first town they have tried."

There was a great knowledge of the Parisians in this method of announcing the most terrible news that the population of a capital ever received. The result was that the people, who, if they had been simply told, "Saint Quentin is taken and the Spaniards are marching on Paris," would have run in terror about the streets, screaming "All is lost! let every one save himself!" now began to cry "Long live the king! long live the queen; long live Monsieur Dandelot!" and followed the carriage to the Louvre almost joyfully. Arrived at the Louvre, Dandelot spoke again.

"My friends," said he, "the queen will be in an hour at the Hôtel de Ville; she will come on horseback, and by your numbers she will judge of your love. Do not forget the torches and the illuminations."

An immense shout was the answer; and they felt that the people were to be relied upon.

The Cardinal de Lorraine was now desired to summon all the magistrates of the city at the Hôtel de Ville at nine in the evening. The young dauphin was sent for, and this procession, which might have been a funeral one, became a real triumph; one hundred and eighty thousand people accompanied the queen, and torches, illuminations, and flowers were to be seen everywhere. Then from time to time a spirit of menace seemed to pass over the crowd, and the cry arose, "Death to the English and the Spaniards!"

The queen and dauphin entered the Hôtel de Ville, but reappeared almost immediately on the balcony, leaving the cardinal and Dandelot to talk to the magistrates and principal bourgeois. They did their business well. They spoke to them of the king's love for his people, and how he was ready to sacrifice life itself to ward off the dangers that threatened them. They declared that, however great the loss that France had sustained, it was not irreparable if the king found in his subjects the same zeal that they had always shown for the glory and interest of the State; and added that the king, in order not to oppress his people, had mortgaged his own private lands, but that beyond this he had no resource but the voluntary aid that would be granted him by the love of his subjects, and that the greater the need the greater should be the efforts of the French nation to enable their king to oppose the enemy with an equal force.

This produced its effect. The city of Paris voted one hundred thousand francs for the first expenses of the war, with a request to all other principal towns to do the same. As for the immediate means of defence, Dandelot proposed a levy of thirty thousand French soldiers and twenty thousand mercenaries; and to furnish the necessary funds for this gigantic undertaking he proposed that the clergy, without exception, should give up a year's income, and that every gentleman should tax himself according to his ability. The *tiers état* were to be taxed by M. de Lorraine. Some of these measures were voted enthusiastically; those relating to the clergy and the nobility adjourned. It was, however, decided that forty thousand Swiss and eight thousand Germans should be enrolled, and that in every province throughout the kingdom companies should be formed of all the young men capable of bearing arms.

They separated at midnight, and then the queen came down holding by the hand the dauphin, who, half asleep,

still saluted the crowd with his little velvet cap. At half-past one the queen re-entered the Louvre, and might have said, like Mazarin, "They have shouted ; they will pay."

CHAPTER XXXVI

AT THE SPANISH CAMP

WE must now see what Philip the Second and Emmanuel were doing in the camp, and how they were there losing that time which others were employing so well.

Firstly, as we have said, the town of Saint Quentin, suffering the consequences of its heroism, had been given up to five days' pillage, and this town, which living saved France, continued to do so in its death struggle, for the victors poured out upon its devoted streets, forgot that the rest of France was busy organizing a desperate defence. We will pass over the five days of murder, incendiarism and desolation, and commence on the 1st of September to show the state of the camp. At eleven o'clock there was to be a council held in the king's tent.

The king held in his hand an open letter, which had been just brought to him by a messenger who was seated on a bench at the door of the royal tent, drinking a glass of wine that had just been poured out for him. This letter, which had a large seal in red wax representing a mitre and two crosses, appeared much to interest Philip the Second. Just as he was reading it for the third time the sound of a horse's gallop stopping at the door of the tent made him raise his head. In a few seconds the tapestry that hung over the entrance was raised, and a servant announced "His Excellency Don Luis de Vargas, secretary to Monsieur the Duc of Alba." Philip uttered a cry of joy, then, as if half ashamed of himself for giving

way to an impulse, kept silence a moment, and then said in a cold tone, "Let Don Luis de Vargas enter."

Don Luis came in. He was covered with dust, and looked pale from a long and hasty ride; but he stood motionless, and hat in hand, before the king, waiting to be questioned before he spoke, for the law of etiquette was more stringent than any other laws in Spain. The king gave a smile like a ray of the sun shining through an autumn fog, and said, "God be with you, Don Luis de Vargas. What news from Italy?"

"Both good and bad, sire. We are masters in Italy, but Monsieur de Guise is returning in haste with part of the French army."

"Is it the Duke of Alba who sends you with this intelligence?"

"Yes, sire, and he ordered me to take the shortest road, and to make all possible haste, so as to be here as long as possible before Monsieur de Guise. Consequently I have made this long journey in fourteen days, while I feel sure it will take the Duc de Guise at least double to reach Paris."

"Really you have been diligent, Don Luis, and could not have come in less time. But have you no letter from the duke."

"Sire, the duke feared that I might be taken prisoner, and therefore merely gave me this message: 'Tell his majesty to remember how King Tarquin cut down the tallest poppies in his garden; nothing ought to grow too tall in a king's garden, not even princes. His majesty,' he added, 'will know what I mean.'"

"Yes," murmured the king, "I understand and recognise the prudence of my faithful Alvarez. Thank you, Don Luis, now go to repose, my people will take care of you."

Don Luis bowed, retired, and the tapestry fell behind him.

We must now pass to the tent of the Duke Emmanuel. He is bending over a bed on which lies a man, under the hands of a surgeon who is dressing a wound in his side, which from the weakness and paleness of the patient seems to be serious. This is no other than our old friend Scianca-Ferro, whom we have forgotten for some time, and who now lies in the duke's tent on a sick-bed.

"Well?" asked Emmanuel, anxiously.

"Much better, monseigneur; indeed the patient is out of danger," replied the doctor.

"I told you so, Emmanuel," said Scianca-Ferro, in a voice which he vainly tried to render firm. "Indeed, it is quite humiliating to be treated like an old woman for a miserable contusion."

"A miserable contusion! which broke one rib and injured two others, and has made you spit blood with every breath for the last six days."

"It is true it was a good blow," replied Scianca, trying to smile. "Pass me the machine in question, Emmanuel."

Emmanuel looked round for what Scianca called the machine, and picked it up from the corner of the tent. It was an immense cannon ball.

"Corpo di Bacco!" cried the wounded man; "confess it is a charming plaything. And what has been done with the man who gave it?"

"According to your wish, no harm has been done to him. He gave his word not to fly, and is now probably, as usual, a few steps from the tent, sighing and weeping with his head in his hands."

"Yes, poor devil, I have, as you tell me, cut open the head of his nephew, a worthy German, who swore well, and struck better. Ma foi! had there been but ten such men at each breach, it would have been something like the famous war of the Titans, which you told me of

when you tried to explain that unlucky Greek that I never could learn. But listen, Emmanuel, there is some one quarrelling with our worthy German. It must be something serious, for they tell me that he has not opened his lips for five days."

Indeed, the sound of a struggle reached them, with an accompaniment of oaths in Spanish, Picard, and German.

Emmanuel left Scianca-Ferro to the care of the doctor, and went out to see what was the matter. The authors of the commotion were a donkey, loaded with cabbages, carrots and lettuces, braying loudly, and kicking his load all about the ground; Heinrich Scharfenstein, who was laying about him vigorously with the pole of a tent which he had torn up, and who had already overturned seven or eight Flemish soldiers, for his melancholy had taken nothing from the strength of his arm; and a young and pretty peasant girl, who with a vigorous arm was belabouring a Spanish soldier with all her strength, he having probably attempted to take some liberties with her, while a peasant, the proprietor of the ass, was swearing loudly as he picked up the fallen vegetables, which the soldiers appeared to covet.

The presence of Emmanuel produced the effect of a Medusa's head: the soldiers let fall their cabbages and lettuces, the girl let go the Spanish soldier, who ran off with half a moustache, and even the ass ceased to bray. Heinrich alone, like a machine that could not stop, went on dealing blows.

"What is the matter?" asked Emmanuel.

"Ah! monseigneur, I will tell you," said the peasant, approaching the prince with his arms full of vegetables, and holding his hat between his teeth, which rendered his *patois* still more unintelligible.

"Diable!" said Emmanuel, "I cannot understand, my friend. I can speak Italian, Spanish, French, or German,

but I do not understand Picard. Is there no one who can tell me in French?"

"In French! Here is my daughter Yvounette, who has been to school near Somme Rouche at Saint Quentin. Speak, Yvounette."

The young girl advanced timidly.

"Excuse my father, monseigneur, he comes from Savoy, where they speak only Picard. Yesterday we heard in our village that fresh provisions were wanted at the camp, and that there were no vegetables even at your table or the king's, monseigneur."

"Well, now I can understand," said the duke; "and in truth, my girl, though we do not want for provisions, vegetables are scarce."

"So my father said, 'I will take my donkey and load it with cabbages, carrots, and lettuces, and go to the camp; perhaps it will please the king and the Duke of Savoy to have some fresh vegetables.'"

"Go on, my child."

"So this morning, at daybreak, my father and I went into the garden, and cut all our best vegetables and loaded our donkey, and came here. Did we do wrong, monseigneur?"

"On the contrary, it was a very good idea."

"So we thought; but hardly had we arrived, when your soldiers rushed upon our poor ass, in spite of my father's repeating, 'They are for the king and the duke.' Then we began to cry out, and the donkey began to bray; but in spite of that, we should have been robbed, not to speak of the rudeness offered to me, but for that brave man who came to our help."

"Yes," said Emmanuel, "and here are two men dead and four or five wounded, for some miserable vegetables. But never mind, he acted with a good intention."

"Then, monseigneur, you are not angry with us?" asked Yvounette, timidly.

"No, my pretty girl, on the contrary."

"Then, monseigneur, as we have come five leagues and are very tired, may we stay here till the heat of the day has passed?"

"As long as you like," replied the prince, "and here are three pieces of gold for your trouble." Then turning to one of his servants he said, "Gaëtano, take these vegetables to the canteen of the king, give these honest people something to eat and drink, and see that they are not molested."

Then, as the time for the meeting in the king's tent was drawing near, Emmanuel returned to his friend Scianca before he went there, and in his pre-occupation never observed the strange glance that the peasant and his daughter exchanged with a man who advanced, furnishing the armour of the Constable de Montmorency.

CHAPTER XXXVII

IN WHICH YVOUNET GETS ALL THE INFORMATION HE DESIRES

THE pretext to enter the camp had been well chosen, and completely deceived the Duke of Savoy. In fact, if we may believe Mergey, a follower of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, who was made prisoner at the battle of Saint Laurent, there was no abundance in the Spanish lines, and even at the duke's table they were reduced to water, which seems much to have saddened M. Mergey.

When Emmanuel was gone, Gaëtano led the peasant and his daughter into an open space surrounded by palisades, which adjoined the duke's tent, where they proceeded to unload the ass, and then received from Gaëtano a loaf, a piece of cold meat, and a little wine—a

magnificent gift under the circumstances of the army. Then, in order, doubtless, not to expose themselves to a fresh attack, they went cautiously out, looking around to see that no stragglers were about. No one was visible but the man who was still cleaning the constable's armour, and Heinrich Scharfenstein, who had not moved since the peasant left him.

The peasant went up to Heinrich, and, thanking him for his services, asked him to share his repast; but Heinrich shook his head and murmured—"Since Frantz is dead, I am never hungry."

The peasant looked sadly at him, exchanged another glance with the armour-cleaner, and then rejoined his daughter, who had seated herself upon some hay in a little shed. Scarcely had they commenced their repast, when the indefatigable cleaner drew near.

"Peste!" cried he, "what luxury! I have a great mind to invite the constable to come and partake."

"Ah! ma foi, no," replied the peasant, in excellent French, "he would eat all our little pittance himself."

"Besides, they say he is rude to young girls," said the daughter.

"Much you fear any one. Ah! mon Dieu, what a blow you gave that Spaniard who came to embrace you. I recognised you at once. What the devil made you both come here, to risk being hung for spies?"

"Firstly, to get news of you and your companions, my dear Pilletrousse."

"You are too good, Mademoiselle Yvounette, and if you will fill that glass, which seems to have been brought purposely for me, we will drink first to our own healths, which seem good, and then to that of our companions, who are unluckily not so well off."

"And I," said Yvounet—for doubtless our readers have recognised him in spite of his disguise, and the syllable added to his name—"will tell you what I

come here for, and you must aid me to accomplish my mission."

"Ah!" said Pilletrousse, smacking his lips, "it is so pleasant to meet with an old friend."

"Do you speak of the wine, or of me?" said Yvounet.

"Of both. But to return to our companions; Maldent, here, must have told you all about Procope, Lactance, and himself; for I heard that you were all buried together."

"Yes; and we remained there several days," replied Maldent.

"But you got out of it triumphantly. Worthy Jacobins! and how did they feed you during your burial?"

"With their best; no one was ever better cared for."

"And did the Spaniards never visit you in your cave?"

"Two or three times we heard the sound of their steps on the staircase, but, seeing the long line of sepulchres lighted by a single lamp, they retired, and I really believe if they had come they would have been more frightened than we."

Well, as for me, thanks to my knowledge of Spanish, I 'passed for a friend of the conquerors; then I glided towards the tent of the constable and set to my work there."

"But Frantz and Malemort?"

"Look at poor Heinrich, weeping; that will tell you what has become of Frantz."

"How could such a giant be killed?" said Yvounet, with a sigh, for he was fond of Frantz.

"It was not by a man he was killed, but by an incarnate demon called Scianca-Ferro, a foster-brother of the Duke of Savoy. Heinrich, who saw him approaching, and about to attack his nephew, hurled his iron club at him, which hit him in the side, and broke his cuirass and his ribs; but it was too late; poor Frantz had already fallen under a terrific blow dealt by Scianca-Ferro, who, as he himself fell, cried out, 'Let no one hurt him who threw his club at me; if I recover I wish to cultivate the acquaintance of

this amiable battering ram.' Then he fainted, but his wish has been respected.

"Heinrich was taken prisoner without difficulty, because, when he saw his nephew fall, he went to him, sat down on the wall, and laid his head on his knees. He was surrounded, and asked to surrender. 'Will they separate me from the body of my boy?' asked he. 'No,' they said. 'Then do what you like with me,' said he. Then he took the body of Frantz in his arms and followed them to the tent of the Duke of Savoy, kept him a day and a night, dug his grave by the side of the river, buried him, and then went back and sat in the place where you found him."

"Poor Heinrich!" said Yvounet.

"And Malemort, what has beccme of him?" asked Maldent.

"Malemort received two new wounds, which, with the old ones, made up twenty-six, and as they thought him dead, they threw him into the river; but it appears that the freshness of the water brought him to himself, for, in taking the constable's horse to drink at the Somme, I heard a poor wretch groaning. I approached, and recognised Malemort."

"Who expired in your friendly arms?"

"Not at all; who only wanted my help to scramble out. Fracasso is the only one of whom I know nothing."

"And I can tell you about him," said Yvounet, with a shudder. And he recounted, growing pale even in the broad daylight, what had happened to him on the night of the 27th.

Just as he finished his recital, a great movement announced that the conference in the king's tent was over. All the chiefs came out and proceeded to their respective quarters, calling to them their men, as though they had orders to transmit, but all appeared out of temper. Then came Emmanuel himself, looking anything but pleased.

"Gaëtano," cried he, "give the orders to strike the tents, saddle the horses, and pack the baggage."

This indicated a departure, but gave no hint of the intended route, to ascertain which was Yvounet's object.

Pilletrousse ran towards the constable's tent hoping, to hear news there. The false peasants passed along with their donkey, and waited in hopes of some remark giving them the desired information; they had not long to wait. Gaëtano came out to give his orders to the grooms and valets, and seeing them, said, "You here still, good people?"

"Yes," said Yvounet, "my father is waiting to know where he shall bring the next vegetables."

"Ah! he finds us good customers. Well! let him come to Catelet, which we are going to besiege."

"To Catelet," murmured Yvounet. "Mon Dieu! they are turning their backs on Paris. Here is good news for our king."

In five minutes the two had crossed the Somme, and an hour after Yvounet, who had resumed his own dress, was galloping along the road to La Fère. At three in the afternoon he entered the château of Compiègne, waving his hat and crying, "Good news! Paris is saved!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

GOD PROTECTS FRANCE

FROM the moment when Philip the Second and Emmanuel did not march immediately on Paris, Paris was saved. How could such a fault have been committed?—through the irresolute character of the King of Spain, or from the effect of that special favour which, in extreme situations, God always grants to France? The reader remembers the

letter that King Philip held in his hand at the moment that Don Luis de Vargas arrived from Rome.

This letter was from the Bishop of Arras, one of the counsellors of Philip, in whom this prince, so little confiding, generally had the most confidence. Philip had sent to consult him as to what he should do after the taking of Saint Quentin, and the bishop, as might have been expected, had answered rather as a churchman than a soldier. Cardinal Granvelle, in his collection of state letters, has preserved this one, which had so great an effect on the destinies of France, and from which we will extract a passage.

"It would not be prudent to attempt anything more against the French this year, the season being opposed to it, as well as the nature of the country; you might compromise the advantages already obtained, and the reputation of the Spanish arms. The best plan would be to limit yourself to disquiet the enemy, by ravaging the country beyond the Somme."

It was therefore the opinion of the bishop that in spite of the double victory of Saint Laurent and Saint Quentin, the Spaniards should penetrate no further into France. Although more obscure in the eyes of others, the advice of the Duke of Alba was not less clear in the eyes of Philip: "Sire, remember how Tarquin cut down the tallest poppies in the garden."

Such was the advice of this minister, whose gloomy temper harmonised so well with the terrible temperament of the successor of Charles the Fifth. Now, this poppy that raised its head so high, was it not Emmanuel? If he grew too high, would he not have to be feared? If, after Saint Laurent and Saint Quentin, he took Paris, what could recompense such services?

Would it be enough to restore to the son what had been taken from the father? Besides, would it be for the king's interest to restore them? And when Piedmont was once again his, who would insure that he would not

take the Milanais, and after that Naples, those two possessions of Spain in Italy, which had already cost so much blood? This was the gigantic phantom which raised itself between Saint Quentin and Paris. Consequently, against the general opinion, and particularly against that of Emmanuel, which was to march directly upon Paris, without leaving Henri the Second breathing time, Philip had declared that the victorious army should not move forward, but should content itself with besieging Le Catelet, Ham, and Channy, while they rebuilt the walls of Saint Quentin, in order to make of this city the bulwark of the Spanish conquests. Henri the Second could hardly believe the good news brought to him by Yvounet; and the French went on raising troops with vigour. Still further to re-assure them, they soon heard that the English and Spanish had quarrelled at the siege of Le Catelet. The English, wounded at the haughty manners of the Spaniards, who took to themselves the whole glory of the battle and siege, declared their intention of retiring; and Philip, instead of trying to reconcile them, upheld the Spaniards, in consequence of which, the English did withdraw. A week after, the Germans mutinied, declaring that Philip and Emmanuel had received all the ransoms of the prisoners from Saint Quentin. Three thousand Germans, therefore, deserted from the Spanish army, and entered the service of the Duc de Nevers. Compiègne was fortified with great care, and an intrenched camp, capable of containing one hundred thousand men, was constructed under the protection of its guns.

About the end of September the Duc de Guise arrived, and on the following day a magnificent cavalcade, headed by the duke himself, having the cardinal at his right, M. de Nemours at his left, and two hundred gentlemen behind him, left the Hôtel Guise, and traversed Paris, exciting the enthusiasm of the Parisians, who thought

that they had nothing to fear now that their beloved duke had returned: and that same evening, the duke was proclaimed lieutenant-general of the kingdom. Perhaps in this, Henri forgot his father's last words, never to elevate the house of Guise too high: but the situation was critical, and this wise advice was neglected.

The next day, the 29th of September, the duke set off for Compiègne, and began by reviewing the troops assembled, as by a miracle, at the camp. On the 10th of August, there were not, including the garrisons of the towns, ten thousand men in the whole country fit to bear arms, and even those were so discouraged that they were ready to fly at the first fire. On the 30th of September, the Duc de Guise reviewed an army of fifty thousand men, stronger than that of the King of Spain since his rupture with the English and Germans, and this army was full of enthusiasm, and crying out to be led against the enemy.

Happy country, where it is only necessary to strike the ground in the name of the king and the nation, and armies immediately spring forth.

At last, on the 26th of October, they learned that Philip the Second, accompanied by the Duke of Savoy and the whole court, had left Cambray to return to Brussels, regarding the campaign as over. Then every one might cry, not only like Yvounet, "Paris is saved!" but "France is saved!"

CHAPTER XXXIX

A REMEMBRANCE AND A PROMISE

A YEAR had passed since King Philip the Second, retreating from Cambray to Brussels, declared the campaign of 1557 terminated, and caused twenty-five millions of men to cry joyfully, "France is saved!"

We have seen what miserable considerations probably prevented him from following up his conquests. The annoyance experienced by the Duke of Savoy was all the greater that he suspected the cause of his being thus stopped on the right bank of the Somme, a circumstance which has puzzled modern historians, as much as the halt of Hannibal at Capua did ancient ones.

Great events, however, with which we must acquaint the reader, had taken place this year. The greatest was the retaking of Calais from the English by the Duc de Guise. When Edward the Third attacked Calais by land and sea—by sea, with a fleet of eighty ships, and by land, with an army of thirty thousand men—the town, although poorly garrisoned, had, under the command of Jean de Vienne, one of the bravest captains of his time, held out for a year, until the inhabitants had eaten the last bit of leather in the town. Since that time, that is, for two hundred years, the English had done everything to render Calais impregnable; and yet this town, which the English had taken a year to subdue, the Duc de Guise had carried in eight days. He had also re-taken Guines and Ham, and the Duc de Nevers had taken Herbeumont.

Dandelot was the only rival feared at that time by the Duc de Guise, for Montmorency and Coligny were still prisoners, and to remove any one who might approach him in the king's favour the duke was ready for anything, however ungenerous.

Dandelot belonged to the reformed religion, and as he wished to convert his brother, who was still wavering, to the same faith, he sent to him, at Antwerp, where the King of Spain still kept him prisoner, some books from Geneva, with a letter, in which he pressed him to abandon the papal heresies. This letter fell, unfortunately, into the hands of the Cardinal de Lorraine, for it was the time when Henri the Second was acting with most rigour against the Protestants. Dandelot had already been several times accused

of heresy, but the king had either not believed or pretended not to believe it, for Dandelot had been brought up in the king's household since he was seven years old, and had, as we have seen, rendered real services to his country. But after this letter there could no longer be a doubt; however, Henri still declared that he would trust to no proof but Dandelot's own words, and therefore resolved to interrogate him in the presence of the whole court. But, not wishing to take him by surprise, he asked the Cardinal de Chatillon, his brother, and François de Montmorency, his cousin, to bring Dandelot to the queen's country house at Meaux, where the king then was, and to tell him to prepare himself with his defence.

The king was at dinner when Dandelot's arrival was announced to him. He received him with great kindness, assured him that he would never forget his services, and then began to speak of the rumours accusing him of thinking and speaking against the Catholic religion, and ending by saying—

“Dandelot, I desire you tell us your opinion about the holy mass.”

Dandelot knew what grief he should cause to the king, and as he had for Henri a great love and respect—

“Sire,” said he, humbly, “can you not dispense with a devoted subject, as I am, answering a question of pure belief, and in which, great and powerful as you are, you are but a man like others?”

But Henri had not gone so far, to draw back now; he therefore ordered Dandelot to reply.

Dandelot, seeing that there was no means of evasion, replied—

“Sire, penetrated with sentiments of the most lively gratitude for all the benefits that your majesty has conferred upon me, I am ready to sacrifice my fortune and life in your service; but, since you force me to a confession in matters of religion, I recognise no master but God, and cannot disguise my sentiments. Therefore, sire, I am

forced to declare that I believe the mass is a thing not only not ordered by our Saviour Jesus Christ or his apostles but that it is an invention of men."

At this horrible blasphemy, which the Huguenots regard as a truth which cannot be too loudly proclaimed, the king started with astonishment; and, then, passing from astonishment to anger—

"Dandelot!" cried he, "until now, I have defended you against those who attacked you, but, after such abominable heresy, I order you to quit my presence; and, were it not for my old friendship for you, I would pass my sword through your body."

Dandelot, perfectly calm, bowed without replying, and retired. But scarcely was he gone, when Henri ordered an officer to arrest him and take him prisoner to Meaux. The order was executed; but even this did not content the cardinal. He exacted that the post of colonel-general of the French infantry, which was held by Dandelot, should be taken from him and given to Blaise de Montluc, who was devoted to the house of Guise, having been page to René the Second, Duke of Lorraine.

Such was the recompense of Dandelot for the immense services he had rendered, and which the king had promised never to forget. Therefore, Dandelot's name appeared no more as a victor.

On his side, Emmanuel had not remained inactive, but had vigorously struggled against the power of France.

The battle of Gravelines had been one of the unlucky days for France.

As for King Philip, he commanded in person the army of the Netherlands, which consisted of thirty-five thousand infantry and forty thousand horse; and it was there that he learned the death of his wife, the Queen of England.

The principal army of France was intrenched behind the Somme, and both armies were now inactive for a time.

Charles the Fifth had died in his monastery at Saint Just, on the 21st of September, 1558, in the arms of the Archbishop of Toledo.

The young Queen, Marie Stuart, aged fifteen, had just been married to the dauphin, who was seventeen.

One morning, in the month of November, 1558, Emmanuel, who was giving some orders to Scianca-Ferro, whom he was about to send as a courier to Philip the Second, saw Leona enter his room—beautiful, as usual, but vainly trying by a smile to conceal her melancholy. Through the campaign of the preceding year the young girl had, as we know, been left at Cambray; but the campaign once over, Emmanuel had returned to her, with a love deeper than ever, and as he had since then taken but little part in the war, they had not again been separated. Accustomed to read her thoughts in her countenance, Emmanuel was struck at once with the sadness which pierced through her forced smile.

As for Scianca-Ferro, he saw nothing more than common in the entrance of Leona, whose sex had long been known to him; and, after exchanging with her a shake of the hand, half friendly, half respectful, he took his despatches and withdrew. Emmanuel watched him out, and then turned an uneasy glance upon Leona. She still smiled, but her cheeks were pale, and a tear glistened in her eye.

"What ails my dear child this morning?" said Emmanuel, in a tender, but half-playful tone.

"I have," said Leona, "at once a souvenir to recall to you and a favour to ask."

"Leona knows that, even should my memory be treacherous, my heart is faithful. Let me first hear of the souvenir and then the request."

And, after giving orders to let no one enter, he signed to Leona to sit down on a pile of cushions, which was her usual seat. Leona took her accustomed place, and

then, leaning towards Emmanuel, looked into his eyes with a glance of infinite love and devotion.

"Well!" said the duke, with an uneasy look.

"What day of the month is this, Emmanuel?" asked she.

"The 17th of November, I believe."

"Does that date recall to my beloved prince no anniversary?"

Emmanuel smiled more gladly, for his memory was better than he had pretended.

"This day, twenty-four years ago," said he, "about this time, my horse, frightened by a bull, run away, and carried me to the village of Oleggio, where I found, by the banks of the Tessin, a dead woman and almost dying child. This child I had the happiness of restoring to life—it was my beloved Leona!"

"And have you ever since then had occasion to regret this meeting?"

"On the contrary, I have blessed God whenever I have thought of it, for this child has made all my happiness."

"And if, on this solemn day, I, for the first time in my life, asked you a favour, should you think me too exacting, and would you refuse me?"

"You make me uneasy, Leona," said Emmanuel; "what request can you have to make that I should not willingly grant?"

Leona grew still paler, and in a trembling voice, said—

"By the glory of your name, Emmanuel, by the solemn promises made to your dying father, swear to me, Emmanuel, to grant what I shall ask."

The Duke of Savoy felt that some sacrifice was about to be demanded from him; but he also felt that, so asked, it must be for his honour. He therefore said solemnly—

"All that you can ask, I will grant, Leona, except to see you no more."

"Oh!" murmured she, "I thought he would make that reservation. Thanks, Emmanuel. Now, what I ask is, that you make no personal objections to the peace between France and Spain, of which my brother is coming to submit the proposals to you."

"Peace! Your brother? How do you know what I am ignorant of, Leona?"

"A powerful prince believed that he had need of your humble servant to influence you, Emmanuel, and that is how I know it."

Then, as a sound of horses was heard outside, Leona went and gave the orders, in the duke's name, to let the chief of the cavalcade enter. An instant after, as Emmanuel was holding back Leona, who wished to leave him, the usher announced—

"His Excellency Count Odoardo Maraviglia, envoy of their Majesties the Kings of Spain and France."

"Let him enter," replied Emmanuel, in a trembling voice.

CHAPTER XL

THE ENVOY OF THE KINGS OF FRANCE AND SPAIN

IN the name just pronounced the reader will have recognised the brother of Leona, the young man condemned to death for having attempted to murder the emperor, and pardoned. But, although Leona had recognised him, he was far from guessing that Leona, whom he had scarcely seen, was his sister.

But how Odoardo came to be at once ambassador from the two kings we must explain. Son of an ambassador of King Francis the First, brought up among the pages of the dauphin Henri the Second, and afterwards publicly taken into favour by Charles the Fifth, on the day of his

abdication, Odoardo was welcome at both courts, and was considered as a fit man on both sides. When he entered, Emmanuël held out a hand to him, which he kissed respectfully.

"Monseigneur," said he, "you see me very happy, for I hope to be able to prove to your highness that you saved the life of a grateful man."

"What really saved your life, my dear Odoardo, was the generosity of the noble emperor for whom we are both in mourning. I was only the humble intermediary."

"So be it, monseigneur; but you were to be the visible messenger of favour. However, monseigneur, you now see in me a messenger of peace."

"It was as such you were announced to me, and as such I expected you."

"Announced? Expected? Pardon me, monseigneur, but I thought myself the first to announce my own presence; and as to the proposals I have to make, they were so secret——"

"Do not be uneasy," said the duke, trying to smile. "Have you not heard that some men have a familiar spirit, who tell them of the most secret things? I am one of them."

"Then you know the motive of my visit?"

"Yes—but the motive only, not the details."

"When your highness shall desire it, I will communicate these details."

And Odoardo, bowing, made a sign that they were not alone.

"You can speak before this young man, Odoardo. This is my familiar spirit. Remain here, Leone. We must know what is proposed! Speak, monsieur."

"What would your highness say if I announced to you that, in lieu of Ham, Le Catelet, and Saint Quentin, France will yield up to you one hundred and ninety towns?"

"I should say that is impossible."

"It is true, nevertheless, monseigneur."

"And, among them, is Calais included?"

"Ha! The new queen, Elizabeth of England, who, under pretext of religious scruples, has refused to marry King Philip, has been rather sacrificed in all this. However, it is only on certain conditions that France keeps Calais and the other towns taken from the English."

"And those conditions are——"

"That, in eight years, France will restore them, or pay fifty thousand crowns to England; and with this, Elizabeth, luckily, seems content—having, just now, enough to do with the Pope."

"Has he not declared her illegitimate?"

"Yes, and she has repealed all her sister Mary's Acts in favour of the Catholic religion, and re-established all those made against it by Henry the Eighth and Edward the Sixth."

"And what does France, with her little Queen of Scotland, in this conflict?"

"Henri the Second has declared Marie Stuart Queen of England and Scotland, as heiress of the late Queen Marie Tudor, and only descendant of James the Fifth, grandson of Henry the Seventh, King of England, and in virtue of the act declaring Elizabeth illegitimate."

"Yes," said Emmanuel, "but Henry the Eighth left a will, by which he declared Elizabeth heir to the crown, after Edward and Mary. But now let us return to our own affairs."

"Well, monseigneur, these are the principal conditions of the treaty. The Kings of France and Spain will work conjointly to restore peace to the church, by assembling a general council. There will be an amnesty for those who have followed either party. All towns and castles taken by France from the King of Spain are to be restored. Savoy will be dismantled, in compensation for Therouanne

destroyed. King Philip is to marry the princess Elizabeth of France, whose hand he had previously asked for his son Don Carlos, and with her he will receive a dowry of four hundred thousand golden crowns. The fortress of Bouillon is to be restored to the bishop of Liege. The two kings are to restore to the Duke of Mantua what they took in Le Monferrat, and to leave the citadels they have built there."

"And are all these conditions agreed to by the King of France?" asked Emmanuel.

"All! What do you think of it?"

"I say that it is wonderful, and that if you have had the influence to bring it about, the Emperor Charles the Fifth did well to recommend you to his son."

"Alas! no, monseigneur," said Odoardo, "the two principal agents in this strange peace are Madame de Valentinois, who is uneasy at the growing fortunes of the Guises, and the credit of Queen Catherine and the constable, who feel that during his absence they are rising."

"Ah! this explains the frequent leave solicited by the constable to go into France—the demand just addressed to me, and which I have forwarded to the king, to allow himself and his nephew to be ransomed for two hundred thousand crowns."

"The king will agree, unless he be profoundly ungrateful." Then after a moment's silence, Odoardo went on. "But you, monseigneur, you do not ask what will be done for you."

Emmanuel saw Leona shudder.

"Oh," replied he, "I hoped I had been forgotten."

"Had that been so, monseigneur, they must have chosen some other negotiator than the man who owed his life to you. Oh no, thank God, the conqueror of Saint Quentin I trust, be largely recompensed."

Emmanuel exchanged an anxious glance with Leona, and Odoardo went on.

"Monseigneur, all the places taken from you and your father will be restored, with the exception of Turin, Pignerol, Chieri, Chivas, and Villeneuve, of which France will remain in possession until the day when you shall have a male heir, and until that time the King of Spain will have the right to keep a garrison in the towns of Asti and Venail."

"Then," said Emmanuel, "if I do not marry——?"

"You will lose five towns, so magnificent, monseigneur, that they will suffice for a king's crown."

"But," cried Leona, "the duke will marry. Will your excellency continue, and tell the prince what illustrious alliance is destined for him."

Odoardo looked at the young man in astonishment, and then turned his eyes again on the prince, whose face expressed cruel anxiety. The ambassador interpreted this expression wrongly.

"Reassure yourself, monseigneur," said he; "the wife destined for you is worthy of you. It is Mademoiselle Marguerite of France, sister to King Henri the Second, and she will bring you not only the whole duchy of Savoy, but three hundred thousand golden crowns."

"Mademoiselle Marguerite," murmured Emmanuel, "is a great princess, but I have always declared that I would reconquer my duchy by arms and not by marriage."

"But," said Odoardo, "Mademoiselle Marguerite is worthy, monseigneur, to be the reward of your victories, and few princes obtain the hand of the sister of a king as a reward for gaining a battle and taking a town."

"Oh!" murmured Emmanuel, "why did I not break my sword at the commencement of the campaign?"

Odoardo looked at him in astonishment.

"Will your excellency," said Leona, "leave me a little while alone with the prince?"

Odoardo looked at Emmanuel.

"A quarter of an hour," repeated Leona, "and then

your excellency shall receive from the duke the desired answer."

Odoardo bowed and withdrew, feeling that the mysterious page alone could overcome the incomprehensible opposition of the duke to the offers made to him. A quarter of an hour after, he was summoned, and found Emmanuel alone. He looked sad, but he held out his hand to Odoardo and said, "Odoardo, you may return to those who sent you, and say that I gratefully accept the proposal they have made to me."

CHAPTER XLI

WITH THE QUEEN

THANKS to the skill of the negotiator, this treaty, with the exception of a few vague reports, was kept perfectly secret. It was therefore with no small surprise that two gentlemen on horseback, each followed by a squire, met each other at the gates of the Louvre four days after the interview we have just recorded. The Duc de Guise recognised the Constable de Montmorency, whom he believed to be a prisoner at Antwerp, while the constable believed him to be with the army at Compiègne.

Between these two bitter enemies the compliments were not long; then one turned to the right and the other to the left. The duke was going to the queen, the constable to Diana of Poitiers, and both were impatiently waited for. We will now accompany the most important of the men in his visit towards the lady who should have been the most important in the kingdom.

Since the battle of St Laurent, the whole civil administration of the kingdom had been in the hands of the Cardinal de Lorraine, and the whole of the military

arrangements in those of the Duc de Guise. The duke was therefore revelling in a sweet dream of ambition, the sweetest a Guise could have, when a vague rumour came to trouble it. This was the probable return of the constable to Paris, which was doubtless the preliminary to a peace. The bare idea was enough to make the duke leave Compiègne and return to Paris.

On meeting M. de Montmorency at the door of the Louvre, no doubt remained on his mind; the constable was free, and a peace was being arranged. The duke therefore mounted the stairs with a gloomy face, while M. de Montmorency went joyfully up the opposite staircase to see Mademoiselle de Poitiers.

The duke was evidently expected, for as soon as his name was pronounced, Catherine's harsh voice was heard exclaiming, "Enter, Monseigneur le Duc."

The queen was alone, but the duke cast a glance round as if looking for some one.

"Ah!" said the queen, "you are looking for your brother?"

"Yes, your Majesty, for he sent a courier begging me to return to Paris."

"Yes," said Catherine, "but as the courier only set off at half-past one, we did not expect you till late to-night."

"No, but he met me half way."

"What was bringing you back?"

"My anxiety."

"Duke, you were right to be anxious, it was not without cause."

At that moment they heard a key turn in a door opening on the queen's corridor; it opened, and the cardinal appeared. Without any other greeting he walked straight up to the queen and duke, and said, "Do you know that he has just arrived?"

"Yes," replied the duke, not doubting who was meant, "I met him at the gate."

"Who?" asked Catherine.

"The constable," replied both at once.

"Ah!" cried the queen, starting as though she had received a blow, "but perhaps he comes only as before, on a few days' leave."

"No," said the cardinal, "this return is permanent; he and his nephew have been ransomed for two hundred thousand crowns, which doubtless they will find means to make the king pay."

"Do you know anything more?" asked Catherine.

"Not much, but I expect every moment the Duc de Nemours will arrive. He is of the Savoy, and is not suspected of belonging to our party, therefore he may probably have news to tell us."

As he spoke, some one scratched on the door. "Ah!" said the cardinal, "it is probably him."

"Open, then," said the queen. It was the Duc de Nemours, who was about to salute the queen according to the strictest rules of etiquette, but she did not give him time.

"Monseigneur le Duc, the cardinal tells me that you probably bring news," said she. "Speak; what do you know of this miserable peace?"

"I can tell you all, for I have just quitted Odoardo Maraviglia, who negotiated it, and who had himself just left the Duke of Savoy."

"Then you ought to be well informed, for the Duke Emmanuel is one of the people most interested."

"And yet, strange to say, whether from carelessness, or, as is more probable, from some secret love affair, the duke received the offers made to him with more of sadness than joy."

"Perhaps," said the Duc de Guise, bitterly, "he is badly paid by the royal gratitude; it is probable, as he is a conqueror."

"He must be hard to please if he be not satisfied, for

they restore him his whole duchy excepting five towns, and they are to be given up on the birth of a male heir."

"And who is proposed for his wife?" asked the cardinal.

"Mademoiselle Marguerite of France."

"What! the king's sister!" cried Catherine.

"She will gain her wish," said the Duc de Guise; "she would marry no one but a reigning prince."

"Only," said Catherine, with the bitter tone in which women often speak of each other, "she has waited long enough for it: she is at least thirty-six."

"And how did Duke Emmanuel receive the proposal?"

"Very coldly at first; Maraviglia says that he thought he was about to refuse, but after a quarter of an hour's reflection, he accepted, although, in the evening, he told Maraviglia that he did not wish to be positively engaged until he had seen the princess. The ambassador, however, said nothing of all this hesitation, but represented him to our king as grateful and joyful."

"And," said the Duc de Guise, "what provinces are to be restored to him?"

"All," replied the Duc de Nemours, "except Turin, Pignerol, Chien, Chivas, and Villeneuve, and they are to be restored to his first son. The King of France has not been stingy, for he restores to the Queen of England, and the King of Spain, about one hundred and ninety towns and castles."

"Oh!" cried the Duc de Guise, "you are not going to say, I hope, that Calais is among them."

"I know nothing about that."

"Mordieu! for if it were, as it would be declaring my sword useless, I would go and offer it to some prince who would value it more."

At that moment a valet, who had been placed as a guard, lifted the tapestry, and cried, "The king is in the gallery."

Catherine looked at the duke. "I will wait," said he.

"But I will not, with your majesty's permission," said the Duc de Nemours.

"No, it is better not," said Catherine. "The key, my dear cardinal."

The cardinal passed the key to the queen, and the door had just closed behind the Duc de Nemours when at the opposite one appeared Henri the Second, with gloomy look and frowning brow.

CHAPTER XLII

WITH THE FAVOURITE

Now that we have shown proper respect by first following the higher personages, let us pass to the beautiful Diana of Poitiers, and see why the king presented himself to the queen with a frowning face.

The arrival of the constable had been no more a surprise to the Duchess of Valentinois than that of the Duc de Guise had been to the queen. And as scandal was busy about the queen and the cardinal, it was not less so about the favourite and the constable. But how could an old man of sixty-eight, ugly and ill-tempered, rival a king of forty, full of elegance and gallantry? This was a mystery but what was indisputable was the almost passive obedience of the beautiful Diana, that favourite, more queen than the queen, not only to the desires, but even to the caprices of the constable. It was then with a cry of joy that the duchess received the announcement of "the Constable de Montmorency." She was not alone, however; in a corner of the room, half lying on a pile of cushions, were the young queen, Marie Stuart, and the dauphin, married about six months, and still more lover-like than on the

day of their marriage. She was placing on the head of her husband a little velvet cap, which was rather too large for her, and which she declared just fitted him, and so absorbed were they that the announcement of the return of the illustrious prisoner was not even heard by them. Therefore, without heeding them in the least, Diana advanced to meet the constable with open arms, and offered him her fair forehead to kiss. He, more prudent than she, stopped just as he was about to place his lips there.

"Hola! it seems to me that you are not alone, beautiful duchess," said he.

"Yes, my dear constable."

"No, no; old as I am, my eyes are still good enough to see some one in that corner."

Diana laughed. "That is the Queen of England and France, and the heir to the crown of France. But be easy; they are so much occupied with their own affairs that they do not notice us."

"What! do matters go so badly beyond the sea, that their young heads are so preoccupied?"

"My dear constable, the Scotch might be in London, or the English in Edinburgh, and the news might be proclaimed aloud in their presence, but I do not believe either of those children would turn. Oh no, they are thinking of far more important things; they love each other, my dear constable, and what are kingdoms compared to love?"

"Well, then, all is right," said the constable. "But let me hear how our affairs go on."

"Marvellously well, it seems to me, since you are here," said Diana. "Peace is nearly concluded, Monsieur de Guise will be forced to sheath his sword, and there will no longer be any need of a lieutenant-general, but there is always need of a constable; therefore my dear Montmorency will take his place again as the first."

"Not badly played. But the question of ransom remains; and do you know, my beautiful Diana, that I am released on parole, and our two hundred thousand crowns."

"Well?" said Diana with a smile.

"Well, mille diables! I do not mean to pay it."

"For whom were you fighting when you were taken, my dear constable?"

"Pardieu! for the king, although my wound was all my own."

"Well, then, the king must pay it. But my dear constable, you wrote to me that if peace negotiations were brought to a happy issue, Duke Emmanuel, who is a generous prince, would probably give you up your two hundred thousand crowns."

"Ah! you have a good memory," said the constable, laughing. "Well, if I must tell, he has given it up; but as my nephew Coligny is too proud to accept such a gift, I shall not say a word about it."

"So that he will pay you his share for the duke."

"Just so."

"And the king will give you your two hundred thousand crowns for the duke."

"Exactly."

"So that you will have three hundred thousand crowns."

"Yes, and which I shall owe chiefly to my beautiful duchess. But what shall we do with this money?"

"First," said the duchess, "we must apply two hundred thousand to indemnify the dear constable for his expenses in the campaign and his imprisonment. As for the rest——"

"This is how I will divide them. Half for my beautiful duchess, to buy trinkets, and the other fifty thousand for our poor children."

"It is true that our daughter Diana has already her

dowry as Duchess de Castro, and that is one hundred thousand crowns. But still, my dear constable, if the king in his munificence thinks it is not enough for the wife of a Montmorency and the daughter of a king, it is not I who will ask him to close his purse-strings."

The constable looked at her with a certain admiration.

"Good," said he; "then the king still wears the magic ring that you placed on his finger?"

"Yes," replied she, smiling, "and as I think I hear his majesty's footstep, you will, I hope, have the proof."

"Ah! then he still has the key of that door?"

There were many secret doors in the Louvre, and to all there was one key, to many two.

"Oh!" said the duchess, looking with an expression of raillery at her old adorer, "are you going now to begin to be jealous of the king?"

"I ought to be, perhaps," growled he.

"Ah! take care," said she; "it would be losing two hundred per cent., and that is not what you usually like."

At that moment the king entered.

"Oh! sire," cried Diana, running to meet him, "you are welcome. I was about to send for you; here is our dear constable just arrived, always young and brave, like the god Mars."

"Yes," said the king, "and his first visit is to the goddess Venus, and he is right. Your hand, my dear constable."

"Mordieu, sire!" replied Montmorency, with his usual ill-tempered look. "I do not know if I ought to give you my hand."

"And why not?" said the king, laughing.

"Why? because I think you quite forgot me in my captivity."

"I forgot you!" cried the king, beginning to defend himself when he might reasonably have attacked.

"Is it true that Monsieur de Guise made such a noise in your ears?"

"Mordieu! said Henri, unable to restrain a sharp answer, "one cannot prevent a conqueror from blowing his trumpets."

"Sire," said Montmorency, "some defeats are as famous as victories."

"Yes, but less profitable, you will confess."

"Less profitable, certainly," growled the constable. "But war is a game in which the most skilful may lose; the king your father knew that well."

Henri coloured.

"And as to Saint Quentin, it seems to me," continued the constable, "that if it did surrender——"

"Firstly," interrupted Henri, "Saint Quentin did not surrender; it was taken, and taken, you know, after a most heroic defence. The town of Saint Quentin has saved France, that——"

Henri hesitated.

"Oh, finish. That the battle of Saint Laurent had ruined, I suppose. That is what you meant. One may be half murdered and taken prisoner in the service of a king, and that is how he thanks you."

"No, my dear constable," said Henri, whom a glance from Diana had brought to repentance, "no, I do not say that. I said only that Saint Quentin had made an admirable defence."

"Yes, and how well your majesty has treated its defender."

"Coligny? What can I do more than pay his ransom with yours?"

"I was not speaking of that. I did not mean Coligny, but Dandelot."

"Ah! but my dear constable, Monsieur Dandelot is a heretic."

"As if half of us were not heretics!"

"Constable, you are unjust."

"Unjust! Where is Monsieur Dandelot? Inspecting your cavalry, as he ought to be, or in his castle, reposing after the famous siege of Saint Quentin, where he did such wonders? No; he is in prison at Melun, and why? Because, when asked, he gave his frank opinion about the mass. Oh, mordieu! I do not know why I do not turn Protestant, and go and offer my sword to Monsieur de Cond."

"Constable!"

"And when I think that poor dear Dandelot owes his captivity probably to Monsieur de Guise."

"Constable, I swear to you that Monsieur de Guise had nothing to do with it."

"What! will you tell me that it was not a machination of that infernal cardinal?"

"Constable, do you wish," said the king, eluding the question, "that Dandelot shall be set at liberty in honour of your return?"

"Mille diables! I should think so."

"Well, then, sire," said Diana, "say we will that our good servant Dandelot be set at liberty, to assist at the marriage of our beloved daughter Diana de Castro with François de Montmorency."

"Yes," growled the constable, "if ever the marriage take place."

"And why should it not? Do you think them both too poor?" said Diana.

"Oh! if that be all," said the king, "we will find one hundred thousand crowns in some corner of our chest."

"Who spoke of money?" said the constable. "I doubt whether the marriage will take place; but for another reason."

"And what is that?"

"Because your friends the Guises are opposed to it."

"Really, constable, you fight against shadows."

"Against shadows! And what do you think brings Monsieur de Guise to Paris, if not to interrupt this marriage, which might shed new lustre on my house? although," added he, insolently, "Mademoiselle de Castro is illegitimate."

Diana coloured and the king bit his lips, but not wishing to reply to this last speech, only said, "You deceive yourself, constable, Monsieur de Guise is not at Paris."

"And where is he, then?"

"At the camp at Compiègne."

"And you have not given him leave?"

"What for?"

"To come here."

"I, certainly not."

"Then, sire, he is here without leave, that is all."

"You are mad, constable. Monsieur de Guise knows too well what is due to me to quit the camp without permission."

"But, constable," said Diana, "what makes you think that the duke has committed this breach of discipline?"

"Pardieu! I saw him."

"When and where?" said the king.

"Just now."

"Where?"

"At the gate of the Louvre; we met there."

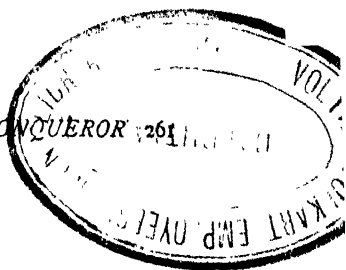
"How did I not see him, then?"

"Because he turned to the left, and is probably now with the queen!"

"With the queen!"

"Oh! not alone, your majesty; I will wager that the cardinal forms a third."

"That I will soon see. Wait here for me, constable." And the king went out furious, and that is why he presented himself with so frowning a look in the queen's apartments.



CHAPTER XLIII

HOW, AFTER THE VANQUISHED HAS BEEN TREATED AS
A CONQUEROR, THE CONQUEROR IS TREATED AS
THOUGH HE HAD BEEN VANQUISHED

THE queen stood near the secret door, the hand which held the key behind her, and looking rather pale. The cardinal in his half military, half ecclesiastical costume, stood near a table, on which his hand rested, while the duke stood upright before the door, looking like a champion in the lists defying all comers. He held in his hand his hat with its red plume, but stood like an oak before the king, without losing an inch of his tall stature.

"Ah! it is you, cousin!" said the king; "I am astonished to find you here. I believed you at the camp at Compiègne."

"Just like me, sire," replied the duke; "I was astonished to find Monsieur de Montmorency here, when I believed him prisoner at Antwerp."

Henri bit his lips at this answer.

"True, monsieur," said he, "but I paid his ransom, and for two hundred thousand crowns I have had the pleasure of recovering an old servant and faithful friend."

"And what about the towns that your majesty is to restore to Spain, England, and Piedmont?"

"I restore those towns, monsieur, not to ransom the constable but to purchase peace."

"I had believed that in France at least we obtained peace by victories."

"Then being a Lorraine prince, monsieur, you know little of the history of France. Have you forgotten the treaties of Bretigny and Madrid?"

"No, sire, but there is no resemblance in the positions. After the battle of Poitiers, King John was prisoner in London; after the battle of Pavia, Francis the First was prisoner at Toledo. Now, King Henri the Second, at the head of a magnificent army, reigns in the Louvre. Why should we, when prosperous, wilfully renew the disasters of those fatal epochs of our history?"

"Monsieur de Guise," said the king, haughtily, "are you aware of the rights conferred on you when you were named lieutenant-general of the kingdom?"

"Yes, sire. After the disastrous battle of Saint Laurent, after the heroic defence of Saint Quentin, when the enemy was at Noyon, when Monsieur de Nevers had but two or three hundred gentlemen around him, when Paris trembled, and when the king watched from the town of Compiègne, then you sent for me, sire, and appointed me lieutenant-general of the kingdom. My rights were then to save France, which Monsieur de Montmorency had almost ruined. What have I done, sire? I have delivered Bourgs, taken Calais, reconquered Guines, Ham, and Thonville, repaired the disasters of Gravelines, and after a year of warfare have brought together in the camp at Compiègne an army twice the strength of what it was when I took the command. Was this my right, sire?"

"Doubtless, doubtless," stammered Henri.

"Then, what meant your majesty's question?"

"I meant to say, duke, that among the rights a king gives to his subjects, that of remonstrance is not generally numbered."

"First," replied the duke, bowing with a courtesy so affected as to become impertinent, "allow me to observe to your majesty that I have not the honour of being exactly your majesty's subject. After the death of Duke Albert, the emperor, Henri the Third gave the Duchy of Haute Lorraine to Gerard d'Alsace, first duke and founder of our house; I received this duchy from my father, and

will leave it to my son. That is what you do with the kingdom of France, sire."

"Do you know," replied Henri, with irony, "that you inspire me with one fear?"

"What is it, sire?"

"That France and Lorraine should one day go to war together."

The duke bit his lips.

"Sire," replied he, "that is more than improbable; but if it should happen, and I should have to defend my patrimony against your majesty, I swear to you, that it would be only on the fall of my last stronghold that I would sign a treaty as disastrous as that to which you have consented."

"Duc de Guise!" cried the king, angrily.

"Sire, let me tell what I and other nobility think. The authority of a constable is such, that they say in extreme necessity he would command half a third of the kingdom. Well, now, without any other reason than *ennui* at his imprisonment, he has cost you a third of yours. Yes, of your kingdom, for I count as such all that Piedmont which cost France forty million francs, and one hundred thousand of her men to conquer; I count as your kingdom all those beautiful transalpine towns where so many of your subjects have established themselves, that little by little the inhabitants have left off their bad Italian, and now speak as good French as the inhabitants of Lyons and Tours."

"But," said Henri, rather embarrassed for a reply, "for whom do I abandon all that? For my father's daughter, my sister Marguerite?"

"No, sire, for Duke Emmanuel Philibert, her husband, your most determined antagonist and enemy. Once married, the Princess Marguerite will no longer be your sister, but the Duchess of Savoy. Shall I tell you what will happen then, sire? Scarcely will the duke have recovered his duchy, when he will tear away all that your father and

yourself have planted there, and all the glory that France has acquired in Italy during the last thirty years will be effaced, and you will lose for ever the hope of recovering Milan. Nor is this the worst, or what grieves me most; it is that this is all granted to the general of King Philip, our most fatal enemy. By the Alps, of which the Duke of Piedmont holds the passes, Spain is close to Lyons, Lyons which before this peace was in the centre of your dominions, and which will now be a frontier town."

"Oh! on that head you frighten yourself without reason, Monsieur de Guise, for the Duke of Savoy passes in reality from the service of Spain into mine. When Monsieur de Montmorency dies, his sword is promised to the Duke Emmanuel."

"Doubtless, then," replied the duke, bitterly, "that is why he took it in advance at Saint Quentin." Then, as the king made an impatient gesture, "Pardon, sire," continued he, "I was wrong; such questions should be treated more seriously. Duke Emmanuel to succeed Monsieur de Montmorency! He to have the constable's sword! On the day when he receives it, tremble, sire, lest he use it as did the Comte de Saint Paul, also a foreigner. Louis the Eleventh and the Duke of Burgundy also made peace, and one of its conditions was that the Comte de Saint Paul should be Constable of France, and he was; but he always leaned to the side of Burgundy, and went on rapidly from treason to treason, as Comines tells us."

"Then," said the king, "I must answer from Comines. What was the result of these treasons? That Saint Paul was beheaded. And, my cousin, I swear to you that at the first treason of the Duke Emmanuel, the same fate shall overtake him. But it will not be so, please God. Emmanuel Philibert, instead of forgetting what he owes me, will remember what I have done for him; besides, we shall keep in the midst of his possessions the marquisate of Salures, as a mark of honour for the French crown, so

that the Duke of Savoy and his posterity may never forget that our kings have formerly conquered and possessed all Piedmont and Savoy, but that, in favour of a daughter of France married into their house, we restored to them, or rather gave gratuitously all the rest, to render them, by this immense liberality, obedient and affectionate to the crown of France."

Then, seeing that the Duc de Guise did not appear to estimate at its value the possession of Salures, which France reserved—

"Besides," continued Henri, "if you will reflect, Monsieur le Duc, you will agree with me, that it was a tyrannical usurpation on the part of the late king my father, towards the father of the present Duke of Savoy, and to which he had no right; it was not acting like a good Christian to chase a son from his father's duchy; and, had I no other motive than to atone for this sin, I would restore to Emmanuel Philibert what belongs to him."

The duke bowed.

"Have you no answer to make, Monsieur de Guise?" said the king.

"Yes, sire—only, since the impulse of the moment carries your majesty away so far as to make you even accuse your father of tyranny, I, who think Francis the First a great king, and no tyrant, will render an account of my conduct to him, and not to his son. As you judge your father, sire, your father shall judge me; condemned by the living, I appeal to the dead."

Then, approaching the beautiful portrait of Francis the First, painted by Titian, which is at this day one of the principal ornaments of the gallery at the Louvre, and which then hung in the room where the conversation we have just related had taken place—

"Oh, king," said the duke, "thou who wast armed by Bazaral, and who wast called the Knight King, thou lovedst sieges and battles too well, and had too much

affection for thy beautiful kingdom, not to have looked down regretfully on what is now passing. My sword as lieutenant-general of the kingdom is now useless, and as I wish no one to be able to say that such a peace was consented to while the Duc de Guise had his sword by his side, I, François de Lorraine, who have never yet surrendered my sword, surrender it to thee, my king, the first for whom I drew it, and who knew its worth."

With these words, detaching sword and belt, the duke hung them to the frame of the picture, bowed and went out, leaving the king furious, the cardinal terrified, and Catherine triumphing in his nobility.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE HAWKER

BETWEEN these opposite ambitions, each of whom, under the pretext of the dignity of the king, worked for the elevation of his own house, and tried to ruin that of his rival, rose a third group, poetical and artistic, devoted to the beautiful and the good. This group consisted of the young Princess Elizabeth, daughter of Henri the Second, of Diane d'Angoulême, of the widow of Horace Farnese, of the young pair whom we saw in the rooms of Madame de Valentinois, and at the head of all, Marguerite de France, who had just been betrothed to the Duke Emmanuel. Around these charming faces, like butterflies round a flower, had fluttered all the poets of the time, Ronsard, Du Bellay, Godelle, and Belleau.

Since the visit of the Princess Marguerite to Nice, she had always preserved a tender remembrance of a young prince of fourteen, and now, after sixteen years of obstacles and impossibilities, all at once the dream of her heart

had become a certainty, and the hope that had faded away was changed into certain happiness. Therefore, Madame Marguerite was very happy.

But, alas! it was not the same with the poor Princess Elizabeth. Betrothed first to the young prince Don Carlos, with whom she had exchanged portraits, her whole scheme of happiness had been destroyed by the unexpected death of Mary of England. Philip the Second, then repulsed by Elizabeth of England, had turned to Elizabeth of France, and in the conditions for the treaty of peace, a name was changed in the marriage contract, and this change brought misery on three people. The change was, that instead of Don Carlos, King Philip should marry the Princess Elizabeth.

This was a terrible blow to the poor bride, whose husband was thus changed without consulting her. At fifteen, instead of a young prince of sixteen, handsome, chivalric, and in love, she was condemned to marry a king, not old in years, but prematurely aged, gloomy, suspicious and fanatic, who would keep her within the severe bounds of Spanish etiquette, and who, instead of balls, fêtes, or tournaments, gave for sole amusement the horrible spectacle of *auto-da-fés*.

All these personages whom we have named were united after dinner as usual, each dreaming of her joy or her grief: Madame Marguerite was seated near the open window, with the rays of the sun gilding her bright-coloured locks, Elizabeth lying at her feet, and Diane de Castro reading poetry, and Marie Stuart playing on a kind of spinnet an Italian melody, to which she had set words of her own—when, all at once, her eyes, which had been fixed upon the sky, lowered themselves to notice a scene that was taking place in a neighbouring courtyard.

“What is it?” asked she, in that gentle voice which every poet of the time has celebrated. A voice from

below uttered some words that reached her ears, but that of no one else. Then, turning to the others, she said "I have authorised two Italian hawkers, who desire to show us their goods, to be shown up. One carries jewels, and the other dresses."

"Oh!" cried Marie, clasping her hands like a child, "thank you, aunt. Such beautiful jewels and dresses come from Florence and Venice."

"Shall I fetch Madame de Valentinois?" said Diane de Castro.

"No, my dear Diane, we will give her a little surprise," said Marguerite. "We will choose two or three presents for her, and then send her the merchants themselves. And you, dear Elizabeth, will you not smile a little?"

"Why should I smile?" said the princess, with tears in her eyes.

"If only because we love you."

"That makes me weep, for I shall have to leave you."

"Courage, sister," said the dauphin, who, of course, was near his wife. "Perhaps King Philip is not as terrible as they say; you think of him as an old man, but he is only thirty-two."

Elizabeth only sighed more deeply than ever.

"The pretty things that we are about to see will amuse you a little," said Marie; "only, dear sister, dry your eyes to look at them."

"If, among the dresses," said Elizabeth, trying to smile, "there be a black, spotted with silver, remember I engage it for my wedding dress."

The two men now entered the antechamber, each carrying a large box.

"Let them enter," said Marguerite. "Enter, my good men," said the usher; "remember in whose presence you are."

"Oh, be easy," replied, with a strong Savoyard accent

the younger of the two, a handsome fair young man, with a red beard and mustachios, "it is not the first time that we have been in the company of princes and princesses."

"It is easy to hear where they come from," said the dauphin. Then he whispered to Marguerite, "You may depend upon it they are ambassadors in disguise, come to see if you are really the most charming princess in the world, or whether their prince has not been deceived."

Marguerite smiled, but only said—

"Come in, my friends."

"Come in," said the young man to his companion; "do you not hear the lady invite us?"

His comrade entered. He was a man about thirty-two, strongly built, with black eyes and beard, and who, even under his coarse dress, had an air of distinction. On perceiving him, Marguerite started, and hardly repressed a cry.

"Are you Italian, my friend?" said she.

"Si, Signora," replied the last comer.

"And you come——"

"From Venice. On reaching Paris, we heard that there were to be great fêtes here, on the occasion of the peace, and of the marriages of two illustrious princesses, and we thought, my comrade and I, that if we could but see their Royal Highnesses, our fortunes would be made."

He spoke in Italian, and then added, "I was told that there were here two or three princesses who could speak Italian."

Marguerite smiled. "Here is," she said, "my dear niece, Marie, who speaks all languages, but especially that of Dante and Petrarch. Come here, Marie, and ask for news of that beautiful country."

"And I," said the fair man, "can I find no princess who can speak Savoyard?"

"I do not," said Marguerite, "but I mean to learn."

"Ah! you are right; it is a beautiful language."

"But," said Marie, in the purest Italian, "you have promised us wonders; and though princesses, we are women; do not make us wait."

"I am waiting," replied he, "until the beautiful young lady in the balcony, who seems so sad, approaches also I have always remarked that precious stones have a magic power of drying the tears in beautiful eyes."

"You hear, dear Elizabeth," said Marguerite; "come here, and imitate Diane, who is already devouring the boxes with her eyes."

Elizabeth rose listlessly, and stood by her brother François.

"Now," said he, mockingly, "close your eyes, that you may not be dazzled by what you are about to see."

As he spoke, the dark man opened his box, and, accustomed as they were to precious stones and jewellery, all the princesses uttered a cry of admiration.

CHAPTER XLV

THE WEDDING DRESSES

INDEED, one might have thought that the hand of some genius had opened before the princesses one of the mines of Golconda, so much did the box glisten with diamonds, turquoises, sapphires, emeralds, and rubies, among whose brighter light lay pure white pearls of all sizes. The princesses looked at each other in astonishment, wondering if they should be rich enough to buy such wonderful things.

"Well," said Marie Stuart to the dauphin, "what do you say to that?"

"I," replied he, "can say nothing. I can only admire."

The dark Italian, as though he had divined what had passed just before his arrival, now said—

“Let us first think of the absent: they will be grateful.”

So saying, he plunged his hand into the wonderful box and drew out a kind of diadem, which made all the spectators utter a cry of wonder.

“Here,” said he, “is a diadem, very simple, but which in its simplicity, thanks to the skill of the maker, appears to me worthy of the person for whom it was destined. It is, you see, a triple crescent made into a love knot; in the opening a beautiful Endymion is lying asleep, and here in her car of mother-of-pearl with diamond wheels comes the goddess Diana to visit him in his sleep. Is not one of the illustrious princesses before my eyes called Diane di Castro?”

Diane, forgetting that he who spoke was a simple foreign merchant, advanced eagerly and said, with as much politeness as though she were dealing with a prince, so much did the princely value of the thing shown enhance the value of the bearer—

“It is I, my friend.”

“Well, illustrious princess,” replied the Italian, bowing, “here is a diadem which was sculptured by Benvenuto Cellini, by the order of Cosmos the First. I was passing through Florence; it was for sale, and I bought it, hoping to dispose of it advantageously at the court of France. Tell me, would it not look well on the white brow of the Duchesse de Valentinois?”

Diane uttered a cry of joy. “How pleased my mother will be!” she cried.

“Diane,” said the dauphin, “tell her that François and Marie present it to her.”

“Since monseigneur has pronounced two such illustrious names,” said the Italian, “will he be kind enough to let me place before his eyes what, in my humble desire to be

agreeable, I had prepared to offer. Here, monseigneur, is a reliquary of pure gold which belonged to Pope Leo the Tenth, and which contains a piece of the true cross. It was designed by Michael Angelo, and executed by Nicolas Braschi of Ferrara; the rubies which surround it were brought from India by the celebrated Marco Polo. This splendid trinket was in my mind destined for the young, beautiful, and illustrious Marie Stuart, and will continually recall to her, in that heretic land over which she is destined one day to reign, that there is but one true faith, for which it is better to die, than by denying it to acquire the triple crown of Scotland, Ireland, and England."

Marie Stuart had already stretched out her hand for this magnificent bijou, when François stopped her, saying—

"Marie, take care: this must cost a king's ransom."

A smile passed over the lips of the Italian, but he said—

"I had credit when I bought it, monseigneur, and as I have full confidence in the buyer, I will give credit for it."

And it passed from the hands of the merchant to those of Marie Stuart, who went to place it on a table to admire it at her ease. François was about to follow her when the Italian stopped him.

"Pardon, monseigneur," said he; "but here is something that I had intended for you. Will you do me the favour to look at this weapon?"

"Oh! the beautiful poignard!" cried François, tearing it from the hands of the Italian.

"Is it not a marvellous piece of work, monseigneur? It was destined for Lament de Medicis, a pacific prince, who never killed any one. It was carved by the goldsmith Ghirlandajo, who has a shop at Florence. Lament died before it was finished. For sixty-seven years it remained the property of the descendants of Ghirlandajo; they had need of money at the time I was passing through Florence, so I got this for a mere trifle. Take it in all confidence monseigneur: this will not ruin a dauphin or France."

The young prince uttered a cry of joy, drew the poignard from the sheath, and then, to assure himself if the blade were really equal to the mounting, he placed a piece of gold on the table, before which Marie was, on her knees, and with a blow more firmly given than could be expected from so slight a hand, he pierced the gold right through.

"Ha!" cried he joyfully, showing the piece of gold, through which appeared the point of the steel, "can you do as much?"

"Monseigneur," replied the Italian, "I am but a poor foreign merchant, little used to the sports of princes and captains; I sell poignards, but do not use them."

"Oh!" said the dauphin François, "you have the look, my friend, of a man who, on occasion, could use the sword and the dagger as well as any one. Try, then, to do what I have done, and if you unfortunately should break it, the loss shall be mine."

The Italian smiled and said—

"If you really wish it, I will try."

François began to feel in his pocket for a second golden crown, but before he found it, the Italian had drawn from the little leather purse which hung to his belt a Spanish coin, three times as thick as the one pierced by the dauphin, and had laid it on the table. Then, with an almost careless movement of his arm, he renewed the experiment, and after having pierced the piece of gold as if it were cardboard, the blade penetrated two or three inches deep into the oak table. The blow also had been given as exactly in the middle of the gold piece as though measured by a compass. The Italian then left the young prince to draw the poignard from the table as he could, and returned to his jewels.

"And I, my friend," said Diane de Castro, "have you nothing for me?"

"Yes, madame, here is an Arab bracelet, of great richness and supreme originality. It was taken at Tunis, when the Emperor Charles the Fifth entered there in

triumph in 1535. I bought it of an old condottieri, who had followed the emperor in this campaign, and put it aside for you; but if it does not please you, you can choose something else. Thank God, we are not yet at the end of our stock."

The bracelet, however, as the merchant had said, was at once too original and too rich not to content Diane. She took it, wondering only whether she could pay for it.

There remained only the Princess Elizabeth and the Princess Marguerite.

"Madame," said he, turning to the *fiancée* of King Philip the Second, "although I had also put aside something for you, would it not please you better to choose for yourself?"

Elizabeth seemed to start from a reverie.

"What did you say?" replied she.

Then Marguerite, taking from the hands of the hawker a magnificent necklace of pearls, clasped by a diamond as large as a nut, said—

"We wish, dear little one, that you should try on this necklace, and see how it looks on you."

And she clasped the necklace on Elizabeth, pushing her towards a little mirror that she might admire herself; but Elizabeth, without stopping at the mirror, returned to her seat by the window.

"Alas!" murmured Marguerite, "all the pearls in the world would not dispel that sadness." Then turning to the Italian, "And am I, then, the only one forgotten?" said she.

"Madame," replied he, "chance, or rather good fortune, made me meet on my road Prince Emmanuel Philibert. As I am from Piedmont, and, consequently his subject, I told him the object of my journey, and that I hoped to have the honour of seeing your highness. Therefore, in case I should do so, he gave me to lay at your feet this belt, which was given by his father, Charles the Third, to

his mother, Beatrice of Portugal, on the day of their marriage. It is, as you see, a serpent of gold, enamelled with blue, of which the mouth sustains a chatelaine, to which hang five keys of the same metal. These are the keys of Turin, Chambéry, Nice, Verceil, and Villeneuve al Asti, blazoned with the arms of these towns, the gems of your crown; each of them opens in the palace of Turin a drawer, which you will open yourself on the day of your entrance there as reigning Duchess of Piedmont. After this belt, what could I offer worthy of you, madame? nothing, but, perhaps, some of the rich stuffs that my companion will have the honour of showing you."

Then the other opened his box and displayed to the wondering eyes of the princesses a dazzling collection of those magnificent scarfs from Tunis or Smyrna; of those rich stuffs brocaded with gold and silver, which Paul Veronese throws over the aristocratic shoulders of his dukes and duchesses, and which, after falling gracefully round them, sweep the steps of the palace behind them; then a choice of those long pieces of satin which come from the East, marvellous specimens of Indian and Chinese patience, on which the needle had traced in colours, brighter than nature itself, a world of fantastic birds, unknown flowers, and impossible forms.

The princesses divided these treasures eagerly, and soon the fair Italian had disposed of his goods as satisfactorily as his companion had done. There now remained nothing but to settle the accounts.

Diane di Castro determined to apply for aid to her mother; Marie Stuart, to her uncles the Guises; the dauphin to his father. As for the Princess Elizabeth, she troubled herself no more about the payment than she had about the purchase, and Marguerite had hers ready.

But just as all were preparing to make their arrangements, the two merchants declared that they could not then tell the prices, and that they must refer to their books

for that purpose, demanding, therefore, permission to return the following day at the same hour. This arrangement pleased every one, as it gave time to procure the money; therefore, the two Italians re-shouldered their packs, and with many bows took leave.

But during these preparations Marguerite had disappeared, and the Piedmontese looked vainly round for her as he left the room where this strange scene had taken place. But when he reached the antechamber he was accosted by a page, who signed to him to lay down his pack and follow him. The Italian obeyed and followed the page along a corridor. At the sound of his steps a door opened, and he found himself face to face with Marguerite, and the page disappeared. He stopped in astonishment.

"Do not be astonished at my sending for you," said Marguerite with a smile. "I did not wish, for fear I should not see you again, to defer my payment until to-morrow."

And with that perfect grace which accompanied all her movements, the princess held out her hand to the Italian. He, with the courtesy of a gentleman, bent one knee to the ground, and placed his lips upon it with a sigh, that the princess attributed to emotion, but which, probably, expressed nothing but regret. Then, after a moment's silence—|

"Madame," said he, now speaking in excellent French, "your highness does me a great honour; but do you know well to whom you grant it?"

"Monseigneur," said Marguerite, "seventeen years ago I went to the Castle of Nice, and Charles the Third presented to me his son, as intended for my husband. From that day forth I considered myself as his betrothed, and have waited patiently for the time when it should please Providence to unite us. God has rewarded my confidence, by making me now the happiest princess in the world."

Then she rapidly threw round the neck of Emmanuel



the gold chain, studded with jewels, which she wore round her own, and then let fall the tapestry which separated her from him with whom she had been exchanging the presents of betrothal.

The next and following days they vainly expected the two Italians, and then, as Marguerite took no one into her confidence, they began to conjecture that the generous distributors of jewels and dresses had been sent by the prince ; but none went so far as to suppose that they were Emmanuel himself and his faithful and inseparable Scianca-Ferro.

CHAPTER XLVI

WHAT WAS PASSING IN THE CHÂTEAU DES TOURNELLES,
AND IN THE STREETS OF PARIS, DURING THE FIRST
DAYS OF JUNE, 1559.

ON the 5th of June, 1559, a splendid cavalcade, composed of ten clarions, a king-at-arms and four heralds, one hundred and twenty pages and thirty or forty squires, who closed the procession, came out of the Palais Royale des Tournelles, situated near the Bastille, passed along the Rue Saint Antoine, followed by a great number of people, and stopped at the Hôtel de Ville. There the trumpets sounded three times, and then, when the crowd was thick enough, and every eye was fixed on them, and every ear open, the king-at-arms displayed a great parchment sealed with the royal seal, and after the heralds had cried three times, "Silence ! listen to what is about to be read !"

The king-at-arms began—

"In the King's name—After so long, cruel, and violent a war, which has been productive of great bloodshed and other evils, It has pleased God in his goodness to give to

all Christendom, so long afflicted, the blessing of a sure and lasting peace. It is therefore reasonable that every one with demonstrations of joy and pleasure celebrate so great a good, which has converted all enmities into friendships, by means of the marriages agreed on by the aforesaid peace; viz. the very high, powerful, and magnanimous prince, Philip, King of Spain, with the very high and excellent princess, Mademoiselle Elizabeth, eldest daughter of Henri, second of the name, King of France, and our sovereign lord.

“Also of the very high and powerful prince, Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, with the very high and excellent princess, Mademoiselle Marguerite, Duchess of Berri, only sister of our aforesaid very Christian King and sovereign lord.

“Therefore, arms now turned from cruelty and violence, can and ought to be employed with pleasure and usefulness by those who desire to exercise themselves in praiseworthy and virtuous acts. Consequently, let it be known to all princes, gentlemen, and squires following arms, and desirous by the display of their skill to excite the young to emulation, that the lists will be opened by his very Christian Majesty, and by the princes Alphonso, Duc de Ferrara, François de Lorraine, Duc de Guise, Peer and Grand Chamberlain of France, and Jacques de Savoie, Duc de Nemours, and held by them against all comers duly qualified. To commence on the sixteenth day of the present month, and to continue until the accomplishment of the following conditions—

“The first joust to be on horseback in the lists, and will consist of four courses with the lance.

“The second, with the sword on horseback, one to one, or two to two.

“The third, on foot, with the pike and sword; and if any one strikes the horse instead of the rider, he shall be put out of the ranks, and return no more, unless the king orders it.

"Four persons shall be appointed to see that all be properly done. That one of the assailants who shall have fought best, shall have the prize, the value of which shall be at the discretion of the judges.

"Also, he who shall have fought best with sword and pike, shall have a prize, at the discretion of the judges.

"All the combatants shall touch one of the shields which will hang at the threshold, according to what they intend to undertake, and shall select any or all of them as they choose. An officer will be in attendance to enrol them according to what they touch, and each combatant shall bring to the said officer, three days before the commencement, his own shield, with his arms on it, to hang up at the threshold. Signed with our own hand. HENRI."

Then the four heralds cried three times, "Long live King Henri, to whom God grant a glorious life!" All the troops then repeated these words, which were responded to by the general acclamations of the crowd. After which the cavalcade resumed their march, crossed the river, and went on till they reached the square of Nôtre Dame, and there stopping with the same ceremonies, read the same proclamation. They then proceeded to the Place du Louvre, where it was read a third time, amidst similar acclamations and bravos from the multitude. They then returned to the Palais des Tournelles, where the king was then holding his court. A week before, intelligence had been received that the Duke of Alva, who was to represent Philip the Second in the marriage ceremony, was advancing towards Paris with a troop of three hundred Spanish gentlemen; and the king had immediately evacuated the Louvre, which he intended to abandon to his illustrious guests, and had sent the constable to meet the Duke of Alva. He met the cavalcade at Noyon, and returned with them to Paris, which they entered on a beautiful morning, and were lodged in the Louvre. The

lists were raised on the space between the Tournelles and the Bastille ; it was two hundred feet long, and one hundred and fifty broad, and was formed of planks, and covered with an awning of gold and azure. Galleries were erected for the spectators, and on the side nearest the castle were three doors in the form of triumphal arches, the centre one the highest. Here were to stand the four challengers, whom we have already named ; and on poles surmounted by streamers hung their respective banners.

At the opposite end the combatants were to enter, and here had been built a large hall where they might dress and undress. The space for the combat was about forty-five feet wide, and was closed at each end by a balustrade three feet high, with two barriers, which could be raised to allow the judges to pass in, or the competitors to pass out.

The judges were to be Prince Emmanuel Philibert, the Constable de Montmorency, M. de Boissy, and M. de Vielleville, Grand Chamberlain and Marshal of France. For them a small tower was erected at each of the four corners. The Duc de Savoie and the Constable were on the side of the challengers, and under them was the balcony hung with brocade, for the queen, princes, and princesses.

All this still empty, but visited each day by the king, whose impatience counted the hours, until it should be filled with challengers and assailants, judges and spectators.

CHAPTER XLVII

NEWS FROM SCOTLAND

ON the 20th June, a second cavalcade, not less splendid than that of the Duke of Alva, entered Paris by the same gate. This was headed by Emmanuel Philibert, the

future husband of Marguerite. At Econen they had made a halt; the prince with his page had entered a house where they seemed to be expected. This house was a little out of the town, and stood alone. His escort waited for him, and in about two hours he re-appeared, looking very sad, but his page was not with him.

"Come, gentlemen, to Paris," said he.

Then with a last look at the house, and a deep sigh, he put his horse to the gallop. At Saint Denis his old prisoner, the constable, sent to him by the king, met Emmanuel, who received all his compliments courteously, but with a grave sadness.

When they reached the barrier, a messenger was sent forward to announce to the king the approach of the prince, and when they had reached the Tournelles, they saw the king standing in the doorway waiting for him, holding his sister Marguerite by the hand; behind him stood Catherine and her five children, while the steps were crowded with ladies and gentlemen. Emmanuel stopped his horse about ten feet off, dismounted, and advanced towards the king, whose hand he wanted to kiss, but Henri opened his arms saying, "Embrace me, my dear brother." Then he presented to him Marguerite. She was dressed in crimson velvet, and her only ornament was the belt with the five gold keys. At the approach of Emmanuel, the blush on her cheeks was almost as deep as her dress. She held out her hand to him, and he, kneeling down, kissed it. He was then presented to the queen, princes, and princesses. Each of the latter had arrayed herself in the gift she had received from the Italian, and which they all believed to have been presents from the Duke of Savoy. Emmanuel then presented to the king the Counts Horn and Egmont, who were destined nine years after to perish on the same scaffold, condemned by the Duke of Alva; William of Nassau, Prince of Orange, a handsome young man about twenty-six, but already

gloomy with that sadness which afterwards procured for him the title of the "Taciturn"; the Dukes of Brunswick, and the Counts Schwartzbourg and Mansfeld. At that moment, just as he finished, a gentleman rode up and alighted, waiting for the king to speak to him.

"Ah! it is Lorges, our Captain of the Scotch Guard," said the king, "whom we sent to your mother's aid, dear Marie, and who comes to give us news of your kingdom of Scotland. Come here, Montgomery, we are going to have great fêtes and great rejoicings."

Montgomery came forward. He brought from Scotland good political, but bad religious news. Elizabeth of England was undertaking nothing against her neighbour; the frontiers were tranquil, but the interior was in flames. The incendiary was John Knox; but this terrible name was scarcely known in France, when Gabriel de Lorges pronounced it. What did it matter, at that elegant court of the Valois, to that brilliant, frivolous, brave, atheistical assembly, to all those kings, gentlemen, sculptors, painters, and writers, what was passing in a corner of the globe which they regarded as the extremity of civilisation? yet Gabriel de Lorges came to tell Marie Stuart that her principal enemy was not the illustrious Queen of England, but a poor heretic preacher, called John Knox. This John Knox was born in Lothian, in 1505, and was therefore at the time of which we write fifty-four years of age. He was about to take orders when Luther's words echoed from Worms to Edinburgh, and then John Knox began to preach with all the violence of his temperament against the pope and the mass. Named in 1552 chaplain of King Edward the Sixth of England, he had been obliged to leave on the accession of Mary, and had retired to Geneva, near Calvin. When Mary died, he judged the time favourable, and returned to Scotland, where he brought thousands of copies of the pamphlets which he had had printed at Geneva, called "Against the Govern-

ment of Women," and which was at once an attack against the regency of Marie de Lorraine, and the future reign of Marie Stuart. Such was the man Marie had to fear. But had she really anything to fear? What did she care about Scotland, she, the wife of a Dauphin of France? What cared she for that wild rose, called the crown of Scotland, when she had the prospect of that of France before her?

Nothing cast a cloud over any of these gay faces, when the bell of Nôtre Dame announced that all was ready for the first of the marriages about to be celebrated, that of King Philip, represented by the Duke of Alva, with Elizabeth.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE JOUSTS

It was on the 27th of June that this marriage was to take place. When they reached the church door, poor Elizabeth nearly fainted, and they were obliged almost to carry her in. Emmanuel looked at her with sympathy, and thought of her whom he had left at Eiconen.

After the ceremony, they returned to the Château des Tournelles, where a grand dinner awaited them, and in the evening Emmanuel opened the ball with the young Queen of Spain. Friends and enemies were united there for the time, and all the great hatreds appeared lulled to sleep, excepting that they separated into groups. The constable, with his sons, Coligny, Dandelot, and their partizans in one, and the Duc de Guise, with his brother and friends in another. The first set looked gay and triumphant; the last, grave and menacing. Every one said, that if at the tourney a Montmorency met a Guise, the mock fight would become a real one.

But Henri the Second had taken precautions ; he had forbidden Coligny or Dandelot to touch any shields but his own or those of Jacques de Nemours and Alphonse d'Este. The same orders had been given to Danville and François de Montmorency. The Duc de Guise had wished at first to have absented himself from the fêtes, and had spoken of the necessity of a journey to his principality, but Catherine de Medicis and the Cardinal de Lorraine had talked him out of this resolution, imprudent, like all those inspired by vexation and pride. He had therefore remained, and the event proved that he had done well.

At midnight they separated.

The Duke of Alva led Elizabeth to her room, placed his right leg in the bed, covered it with the sheet, then drew it out again, bowed, and left the apartment.

The next day all the court were awakened by the trumpets, expect the king, who had scarcely slept, so eager was he about this tourney. From daybreak he had been wandering from the lists to the stables, reviewing his magnificent stud, to which Emmanuel had just added as a present, nineteen horses, saddled and caparisoned.

The challengers and judges breakfasted alone, at a round table, in imitation of that of King Arthur, and were waited on by the Queen, the Princess Marguerite, Marie Stuart, and the Duchesse de Valentinois. After it was over, every one went into his own room to arm.

The king had a magnificent Milan cuirass, damascened with gold and silver ; his helmet, surmounted by the royal crown, represented a salamander with spread wings ; his shield bore a crescent on a blue sky, with this device, "*Donec totum impleat orbem.*" His colours were white and black.

Monsieur de Guise had the same cuirass that he used at the siege of Metz, and of which it bore evident marks ; it may still be seen at the Museum of Artillery at Paris.

His buckler also represented a sky, but with a white cloud veiling a golden star, and the device was "Present, but hidden." His colours were white and scarlet, and "the colours," says Brantôme, "of a lady I could name"; but unfortunately he does not name her, so we are forced, through ignorance, to be as discreet as he was.

Monsieur de Nemours had a Milanais cuirass, a present from the king; his shield bore on it a Cupid, with this device, "Angel or Cupid, he comes from the sky." His colours were black and yellow, which meant, according to Brantôme, "Enjoyment and constancy."

Lastly, the Duke of Ferrara, a young prince little known at that time, was armed with an admirable Venice cuirass. His shield represented Hercules overthrowing the Nemean lion, with this device, "To be strong is God-like." His colours were yellow and red.

At noon the doors were opened. All the places in the galleries were quickly filled with the ladies or gentlemen for whom they were destined. Then the royal balcony was occupied in its turn. On the first day, Mademoiselle de Valentinois was to present the prize, consisting of a magnificent chain, resplendent with rubies, sapphires, and emeralds, separated by golden crescents, triply interlaced. The second day, the conqueror was to be crowned by Mademoiselle Marguerite. The prize was a Turkish axe of exquisite workmanship, which had been given by Soliman to Francis the First. The third day was reserved for the queen, and the prize was a sword, the hilt of which was carved by Benvenuto Cellini.

The musicians, placed in a balcony opposite the royal one, began to play. The hour had arrived; the pages first entered the lists; there were twelve for each challenger, each clothed with silk velvet of his master's colours. Then came four squires to each challenger, whose business it was to pick up the broken lances, and to aid the combatants in case of need. Then came the

four masters of the lists, mounted and armed from head to foot, and each, lance in hand, placed himself before one of the barriers, where he stood like an equestrian statue. Then the trumpeters appeared, and sounded their defiance; one trumpet replied, and a knight, fully armed, with lowered visor and lance in rest, and managing his horse with that grace for which he was noted, rode up and touched the shield of Henri the Second. By the torson d'or hanging round his neck, all recognised Count Egmont, he having received that order in 1546, from the Emperor Charles the Fifth. Then he forced his horse to go back the whole length of the list. At the challenge the king came out fully armed. Even had he not been king, the applause would still have been universal, for it was impossible to have a seat at once more firm and more elegant than that of Henri the Second on horseback; like the Count d'Egmont, he held his lance in his hand. After having made his horse wheel, while he bowed to the queen and princesses, he turned to his adversary, and then the squires raised the barriers, and the masters of the lists cried, "Go on." The two cavaliers waited only for this signal to rush on each other, and each struck full on the breast. Both were too good riders to be dismounted, but the count lost one stirrup, and let his lance fall, while the king's flew into pieces, leaving only a fragment in his hand; the horses, frightened by the shock, stood trembling. Two squires rushed forward, one to pick up the count's lance, the other to give the king a new one. They retook their places, the trumpets sounded again, and this time both lances broke. Henri bent like a tree before the wind, and Egmont lost both stirrups, and was obliged to hold on by the pummel. But the king recovered himself, the count let go the pummel, and both, after this terrible shock, were once more firm in their saddles. New and stronger lances were brought them; horses and riders seemed both equally

impatient; the trumpets sounded, the spectators cried out, and clapped their hands, and amidst the bravos, the signal was scarcely heard. The third shock was the most formidable of all; Henri lost one of his stirrups, and Egmont's lance was shattered to pieces, while his horse reared, and the girth being broken by the shock, the saddle slipped over the back of the animal, and the count found himself unhorsed. But, as he fell standing, this fall, which it was impossible to avoid, only served to show his skill and address. However, bowing to Henri, he declared himself vanquished, and courteously threw himself on the mercy of his conqueror.

"Count," said the king, "you are prisoner to the Duchesse de Valentinois. Go and throw yourself on her mercy; it is she, not I, who will decide your fate."

"Sire," replied the count, "could I have known that so sweet a slavery awaited me, I would have let myself be taken the first time I fought against your majesty."

"That would have spared me many men, count, at Gravelines and St Laurent."

The count retired, and five minutes after was kneeling at the feet of Mademoiselle de Valentinois, while she tied his hands with a magnificent pearl necklace.

Meanwhile the king retired to rest, and left the course to the Duc de Guise. His antagonist was the Count Horn, and, although without much disadvantage on his side, he admitted himself conquered at the third course.

Then came Jacques de Nemours, and a Spaniard called Francisco Rigonnés; at the first blow he lost his stirrup and at the third was thrown from his horse.

The Duke of Ferrara was the last. He rode against Dandelot, and the combat was declared equal.

The first day ended by a joust of the four challengers against four assailants; but, except the king, who, either through merit or courtesy, obtained some advantage over his adversary, all were about equal.

Henri was at the height of joy, and did not hear what was whispered of his antagonists being too good courtiers to conquer a king.

CHAPTER XLIX

THE CHALLENGE

THE next day, King Henry was in such a hurry to recommence, that he advanced the dinner by an hour, that they might be ready at noon precisely.

Just as the trumpets announced the entrance of the squires and pages, a cavalier, wearing a large flapped hat which hid the top of his face, and enveloped, in spite of the heat, in a large cloak, left the stables of the Tournelles, mounted on a fleet horse, and set off at a rapid trot, which soon changed into a gallop, that enabled him in one hour to reach Econen. He did not stop until he reached the house where we saw Emmanuel and his page stop. Mules loaded with luggage, and a horse ready saddled at the door, announced a departure.

Emmanuel, for it was he, threw a rapid glance on these arrangements, tied up his horse, mounted the first flight of stairs, and rushed into the room where a young lady sat, in a simple and dark-coloured travelling dress. As the prince entered the room, she raised her eyes, uttered a cry, and rushed forward. He received her in his arms.

"Leona," said he, in a reproachful tone, "is this what you promised me?"

But she, trembling all over, could only stammer out the name, "Emmanuel!"

The prince, still holding her in his arms, carried her to a couch. He looked at her for some time with indescribable tenderness.

"It is lucky," continued he, "that a few words in your

letter, yesterday, revealed your design to me; besides, I dreamed that I saw you in a nun's dress, or else you would have gone, and I should not have seen you till my return to Piedmont."

"Oh, rather," murmured she, in a faint voice, "you would never have seen me again."

Emmanuel shuddered. "No, no, I was wrong; pardon me," said she.

"Remember what you promised me, Leona," said he, "at Brussels, while your brother, the man whose life we saved, and who unknowingly has brought misfortune on us both, was waiting at the door for a favourable answer, which you in your heavenly devotion begged me to give him; you then swore to me, only to leave me on the eve of my marriage, and afterwards to meet me every 17th of November in the little house at Oleggio, where as a child you were carried by me. Often you have said to me, 'It is you who saved my life, Emmanuel; it belongs to you, do what you like with it.' If that life really belongs to me, do not separate it from mine sooner than necessary. And to keep your vow, without which I should have refused all offers, and am ready to do so still, push to the last limits your devotion, that supreme virtue of the woman who loves, and which makes her more than an angel, since angels have no passions to sacrifice."

"Oh! Emmanuel! Emmanuel!" murmured Leona, who seemed to return to life and happiness under her lover's voice and look, "it is not devotion that I fail in."

"What is it, then?"

"Alas!" cried she, "I am filled with jealousy. Oh! I love thee! I love thee! my Emmanuel."

And the lips of the lovers met in a long kiss.

"Jealous!" said he; "and of what?"

"Oh! I am so no more," cried she; "a love like ours is eternal."

"You are right, Leona," said he, tenderly; "God has made an exception in my favour, and in sending me the heavy burden of a crown, has added one of his angels to help me to sustain it. We will still live for each other, united by an indissoluble tie which can brave time and even absence. I know well that it is a wintry life without flowers, or sunshine, or fruit; but still it is life. 'The earth feels that it is not dead, and we shall feel that we love.'"

"Emmanuel, you in your turn must console and sustain me."

"And now," said the prince, "tell me, my beloved Leona, what made you jealous?"

"Oh! since you left me, Emmanuel, four leagues only have separated us, and I have only seen you twice."

"But, my Leona, you know that all is festivity at the Château des Tournelles. Sad fêtes for two hearts, the poor Princess Elizabeth and mine, yet we have to play our parts, and the king is constantly asking for me."

"But," said Leona, "how could you come away when in the midst of the tournay, when you are one of the judges?"

Emmanuel smiled.

"I ought to be there, certainly, but with lowered visor. Suppose a man of my own height puts on my armour, mounts my horse, and fills my place as judge?"

"Ah! good Scianca-Ferro!" cried Leona.

"Then I, in my uneasiness, tormented by your letter and my own dream, came to see my Leona, that she may renew to me the vow which she was on the point of forgetting. We mingle souls and hearts, and quit each other strong like the giant, who had only to touch the earth to renew his vigour."

Let us leave them exhausting the cup of their last hours of joy, and see what was passing meanwhile at the

Tournelles. Just after Emmanuel had ridden off, a squire knocked at the door of the palace and asked for Emmanuel. Scianca-Ferro was personating him, and he was told that an unknown squire demanded earnestly to speak to him. Emmanuel had no secrets from Scianca, so he closed his helmet, and, going to the darkest corner of the room, ordered them to let the stranger enter.

The squire appeared in the doorway; he was dressed in dark colours, and bore neither device nor arms by which he might be recognised.

"Have I the honour of speaking to the Prince Emmanuel Philibert?" asked he.

"So you see," replied Scianca.

"Here is a letter from my master. I wait for a consent or a refusal."

Scianca-Ferro took the letter, and read as follows:—

"A man who has sworn the death of Emmanuel Philibert, proposes to him in the tourney of to-day a deadly combat, either with the lance, sword, axe, club, or poignard, renouncing beforehand all mercy if he be conquered, as the prince must expect none if he be vanquished. They say that Prince Emmanuel is brave; if he be not unworthy of the name, he will accept the proposed combat, and will promise to obtain the necessary permission from the king.

"A MORTAL ENEMY."

Scianca-Ferro read the letter without any signs of emotion, and then turning to the squire,

"Tell your master," said he, "that all shall be as he desires, and that, after the king has run his courses, he has but to present himself in the lists and touch the shield of Prince Emmanuel. This shield hangs on the right, opposite to that of Monsieur de Vielleville. I pass my word in advance for the king's consent."

"My master sent a written challenge; he desires a written permission."

At that moment Monsieur de Vielleville appeared to see if Emmanuel were ready.

"Monsieur de Vielleville," said the supposed prince, "be kind enough to ask his majesty, for me, to write 'Granted' at the bottom of this letter. I beg the king to consent, as a refusal would touch my honour."

Scianca-Ferro was completely clothed in the duke's armour; his lowered visor prevented his face from being seen, so Monsieur de Vielleville bowed, and went to execute his commission. Five minutes after he brought back the letter with the word "granted," and the royal signature at the bottom. Scianca-Ferro, without a word, presented it to the squire, who took it and went out. Scianca then went to his own room, took his sword and his club, and ordered three lances to be got ready for him. He then took, in front of the barrier, the place which the duke had occupied the day before. The trumpets sounded the signal, and the tourney commenced. The king ran first and broke his three lances, one against the Count Horn, another against the Duke of Brunswick, and the third against the Comte de Mansfeld. Then followed the three other challenges. All these were marvels of skill and strength; still, it was evident that the assembly was pre-occupied by the expectation of some great event. This was the combat authorised by the king. Henri had been unable to keep the secret entirely; but without telling the name of the combatant, he had announced the combat. Every one knew that probably the day would not pass without blood reddening this arena prepared for a fête. The women trembled at the idea of a combat, but still waited for it with impatience.

After the Duke of Ferrara, the general combat should have taken place; the trumpets gave the signal, but in-

stead of four trumpets, one only answered. A shudder ran through the spectators, but two alone knew its real meaning—the king and Scianca-Ferro. The king bent over to see if the duke were at his post, and Scianca-Ferro bent lightly over his horse's neck in answer.

“Good courage, brother!” said the king.

Scianca-Ferro smiled under his mask, and raised his head proudly. At that moment a man fully armed rode into the lists.

CHAPTER L

THE COMBAT

THIS new comer carried a lance in his hand, his sword hung to one pommel of the saddle, and his axe to another. Behind him came his squire with two other lances. He was dressed entirely in black; the feathers of his helmet were black, so were his horse and its trappings, and the only bright points about him were the point of his lance and the blade of his axe. There was no device on his shield which could give any clue to what nation or class he belonged; only a gold chain round his neck and gold spurs on his heels indicated that he was a knight.

At the sight of so gloomy a figure, who seemed sent by Death himself, all the spectators felt a shudder run through them. He advanced slowly to the middle of the lists, bowed to the queen and the ladies, then riding straight up to where the Duke Emmanuel's shield hung, he touched it with the point of his lance, and said,—

“Emmanuel Philibert, Duke of Savoy, before the King of France, the princes, and noble gentlemen here present; before the queen, princesses, and noble ladies who listen

to and observe us, I challenge you to a combat for life or death, without mercy given, taking God for witness of the justice of my cause, and all here present for judges of the manner in which I shall comport myself. God and victory be for the right."

A feeble cry replied to his defiance; it proceeded from the pale lips of Marguerite, who seemed ready to faint. Then followed a profound silence, broken in a moment by these words from him who all believed to be Emmanuel,—

"It is well. I accept the combat as it is proposed, with God for my judge, with the king, lords, and ladies for witnesses, and I on my part also renounce all mercy. And now let God decide on which side the right lies."

Then in a calm voice he turned to his squire and asked for a lance. The squire advanced, bearing three lances well sharpened and brilliant. He chose one, and jumping over the barrier entered the lists.

Then the king came down and took the place that he had abandoned, intending himself to act as judge during this combat.

Meanwhile the two adversaries measured each other with their eyes through their closed visors, and put their lances in rest. The signal was given by the king himself, and immediately they rushed on each other. Each had chosen a different aim for his blow; the black knight directed his lance against the visor of his adversary, while Scianca aimed at the breast. The black knight carried off the ducal crown of Emmanuel's helmet, while Scianca's lance broke into pieces against the steel cuirass of his adversary. The blow had been so violent that the stranger bent double and lost a stirrup. However, he quickly recovered it, and regained his seat. Each rode back to his starting point, and Scianca took a fresh lance. No cry or applause followed this rencontre; the terror of all was too great. Once more the king gave the signal, and a second

shock almost like thunder was heard. The two horses staggered ; the two lances were broken ; the duke's helmet bore marks of the steel ; and Scianca's lance remained in the cuirass of the black knight. For a moment all thought that his breast was pierced as well as his cuirass, but they were mistaken ; the lance had been stopped by the mail of the gorget. He seized the lance with both hands, and tried to draw it out, but being unable, was obliged to have recourse to his squire. Nothing decisive was yet done, but the advantage, if any, was on the side of the duke. The ladies began to feel a little reassured ; the terrible spectacle fascinated them in spite of themselves ; and Mademoiselle Marguerite alone turned away her eyes, and would not look.

The king was delighted ; he scarcely thought of the chances of misfortune, or the blow that might fall upon his sister, but cried out constantly—

“Courage, brother-in-law ! Victory to the shield with the silver cross !”

Each adversary now took up his third lance, and prepared for the third course, and the king once more gave the signal. This time the black horse fell, and Scianca lost his stirrups, and was obliged to catch hold of the pummel, only, with admirable skill he drew his sword as he did so, making the movement seem as if for that purpose. On his side, the black knight no sooner touched the ground than he jumped up again, and also with the same dexterity drew his sword and loosed his axe. Each then drew back a step, fastened their axes to their belts, within reach of their hands, as a reserve, and then, leaving their squires to pick up the lances and lead away their horses, rushed furiously on each other.

If the silence had been great and the attention profound during the first part of the fight, it was deepened now when the hand-to-hand fight began. Every one knew

that Emmanuel excelled in this ; none, therefore, were surprised at the strength and violence of the blows which began to rain upon the black knight ; but all were surprised at the skill and promptitude with which they were parried and returned ; the two swords seemed like tongues of flame ; no eye, however practised, could follow them ; one could only see that they had touched helmet, shield, or cuirass, by the sparks that flew from them.

At last Scianca gave such a blow on the head of his adversary that it must have been cloven had he not interposed his shield. The shield was cut in two, and an incision made in the armlet. The stranger stepped back, threw away his broken shield, and taking his sword in both hands, struck so furious a blow in his turn on the duke's shield, that the blade of the sword flew into twenty pieces, and the handle alone remained in his hand. Scianca uttered an exclamation of joy, as the stranger threw away his shield and broken sword and seized his axe, and then Scianca's faithful axe, which had won him his name, was seen whirling through the air.

Henceforward the question became one of strength. Struck like the anvil by the hammer, the stranger for some time remained as motionless, but at last he began to give ground.

Then Scianca also, taking a step back, gave so terrible a blow right on the visor of the stranger that he threw up his arms and tottered as if about to fall. Scianca-Ferro rushed on him like a tiger, dagger in hand. A cry arose from all the women—

“Mercy ! Duke of Savoy ! Duke Emmanuel, mercy !”

But Scianca, shaking his head, replied—

“No mercy for the traitor !—the assassin !”

And was seeking through the visor a place to insert his dagger, when suddenly a cry was heard—

“Stop, in God's name !”

A man rode in, jumped off his horse, and, rushing up to the conqueror, threw him far from him.

Then, to the first cry of terror succeeded one of surprise, for it was Duke Emmanuel himself who entered.

"Scianca-Ferro," cried he, "what have you done? Do you not know that I do not wish that man killed?"

"I tell you, Emmanuel, that he shall die by my hand."

"Luckily," said Emmanuel, "it will not be this time."

Indeed, although the stranger's face was covered with blood, he had only fainted, and had no serious wound.

"Gentlemen," said Emmanuel to the other judges, "I put this man under the safeguard of your honour. When he recovers, let him be free to retire, without saying a word or being forced to declare the cause of his hatred. I beg this of his majesty."

The squires took the wounded man in their arms and carried him away. Meanwhile, Scianca unbuckled his helmet, whence the crest had disappeared, and threw it from him in a rage. It was not till then that the king appeared convinced.

"Then, brother-in-law, it was not you," said he.

"No, sire, but it was, as you see, a man who did honour to the armour he wore."

And he held out his arms to Scianca, who embraced him, growling all the while. The applause, which up to that time had been kept in by terror or astonishment, now burst forth with a force that shook the building, and the ladies waved their handkerchiefs; but nothing could console Scianca for seeing De Waldeck escape a second time living from his hands. He was led up by the king and Emmanuel to receive an axe, as a prize, from the hands of Marguerite, but, as he was going, he muttered—

"If the serpent fall a third time into my hands, I warrant he will not escape alive."

CHAPTER LI

THE PREDICTION

WHAT had passed remained a mystery, not only to the mass of spectators, but even to those more nearly connected with the duke. How did it happen that the duke, who should have been present, was absent, and that, in his absence, his foster-brother had put on his armour and sustained so terrible a contest for him?

The king appeared desirous to be initiated, but Emmanuel begged him not to attempt to raise the veil which covered this mysterious corner of his life; and Marguerite, whose love gave her a right to be curious, was so happy to see him safe and sound, and had been so agitated by the combat, that she did not press her inquiries.

Three times Emmanuel sent to ask for news of the wounded knight, and heard that he was recovering, and, at last, that he had mounted his horse and was riding away. The only answer to his inquiries was—

“Tell the duke that we shall meet again.”

And then he rode off, unknown to all, and ignorant that it was not with the duke that he had fought.

Henri said to the ladies—

“What can I offer you to-morrow that will be worthy of your beautiful eyes, after the spectacle of to-day?”

Poor king! He did not know that the spectacle of the morrow would be so terrible, that it would make the other to be forgotten.

The next morning, when the king was about to arm Monsieur de Boissy was not at his post.

"Never mind, Vielleville," said the king; "as you are here, it does not matter much, you shall arm me."

Monsieur de Vielleville obeyed, but when he reached the helmet, instead of placing it on the king's head, he stopped, and uttered a sigh.

"Sire," said he, "God is my witness that I never accomplished a duty more reluctantly than what I am now performing."

"And why so, old friend?" asked Henri.

"Because for three nights, sire, I have dreamed that this day would be fatal to you."

"Oh! I know where you get that from—you have been seeing the queen, and she also has been persecuting me about her visions."

"Sire, I have not had the honour of speaking to her majesty for three days, and never on this subject."

"Oh! then I know why you are afraid. It is because your brevet as marshal is not signed yet. Reassure yourself; unless I am killed on the spot, you shall have your brevet; if I cannot sign my whole name, I will sign with my initial."

"If your majesty takes it thus," said Vielleville, "I have but to beg pardon for what I dared to say. However, your majesty might feel sure that, in case of any misfortune happening to you, it would not be my brevet I should regret."

And he put on the helmet. At that moment Coligny entered. He was armed, excepting his helmet, which a page carried behind him.

"Pardon me, sire," said he, "but they say that the jousts to-day are to be terminated by a *mêlée*. I wish to know if it be true, because, if so, I should wish to say a few words to your majesty."

"No; there will be no *mêlée*," replied Henri; "but

tell me, dear admiral, what you had to say, had there been."

"Sire, pardon me a question that is not dictated by simple curiosity. Against whom does your majesty intend to run?"

"Oh! my dear admiral, that is no secret. Against Monsieur de Guise, Monsieur de Nemours, and the Duke of Ferrara."

"And against no one else?"

"No—I think not."

Coligny bowed.

"That is all I wished to know, sire; I am now happy and satisfied."

"It does not take much to make you so, then, my dear admiral," said the king, laughing. "Come, Vielleville, we are late."

The king ran first against Monsieur de Guise; both employed all their skill, but, at the third course, the duke lost his stirrups, so the honour remained with the king, although many said that it was all the fault of a restive horse.

Then came Monsieur de Nemours, who sustained his reputation, but the king did not lose his, for, at the third course, Monsieur de Nemours's horse fell, and the king was declared victor. The Duke of Ferrara, though skilful, was not an adversary to disquiet the king. Queen Catherine began to feel reassured; she had read in the stars that, if the king passed safely over this 30th of June, he would have a long and prosperous reign. The Duke de Ferrara was conquered like the rest; but it was not yet to be over, it was but four o'clock, and the king was not satisfied.

"Ah! mon Dieu," cried he, as the judges pronounced all to be over, "I shall be crowned conqueror too easily."

And seeing Monsieur de Montgomery standing near, fully armed—

"Ah! Montgomery," cried he, "Monsieur de Guise told me that you nearly made him lose his stirrups the other day. While I go to drink a glass of wine, prepare yourself, and we will break a lance in honour of our ladies."

"Sire," replied Montgomery, "I should accept, with much pleasure, the honour conferred upon me, but we have no lances here."

"Oh! I have some, and will send you three to choose from."

Then, dismounting from his horse, the king took off his helmet, and asked for some wine. As he was about to drink, the Duke of Savoy came up to him.

"Another cup," cried the king; "the duke must drink with me to the health of the fair Marguerite."

"Sire," said Emmanuel, "I ask no better; but let me first deliver my message."

"Speak, brother."

"I come, sire, in the name of Queen Catherine, to pray you to run no more. All is finished happily, and she begs your majesty to run no more."

"Bah!" replied Henri; "I have challenged Monsieur de Montgomery, and have sent him three lances to choose from. Tell the queen I will run this one more, and then stop."

"Sire!"

"A glass for Monsieur de Savoie, and I will give him up the marquissate of Salures. But do not tease me any more about this course."

"Yes; but we will, sire," said a second voice behind Henri.

The king turned and recognised the constable.

"Ah! is it you, my old bear? What have you to do here, unless you are thirsty? Your place is in the lists"

"Your majesty is wrong ; my place was there as long as the lists were open, but now that they are closed——"

"Closed ! No ! I have another lance to break !"

"Sire, the queen——"

"Ah ! you also come from her ?"

"Sire, she begs you——"

"A glass for the constable," interrupted the king.

The constable took it, grumbling.

"Sire," said he, "after the peace I have just negotiated, I thought myself an ambassador of some moment, but your majesty proves to me that I had too good an opinion of myself."

"Here, Emmanuel, let us each drink to our ladies, and you, constable, tell the queen that I drink to her health, and will break this last lance in her honour."

There was no more to be said ; the two envoys bowed and retired.

"Here, Vielleville," cried Henri, "my helmet."

But, instead of Vielleville, it was Coligny who entered.

"Sire," said he, "here I am again."

"Then do me the favour to buckle my helmet."

"Sire, one word first."

"No ; if you please, my dear admiral."

"It will be too late afterwards, sire."

"Well, then, speak, but quickly."

"Sire, do not run against Monsieur de Montgomery."

"What ! You also ? You, as half a heretic, should not be superstitious—it is all very well for the queen, who is a Catholic, and a Florentine."

"Sire, what I have to say to you is the more to be listened to, as it proceeded from a great emperor, now dead."

"Ah ! from Charles the Fifth, and you forgot to tell me."

"I gave the counsel indirectly, sire, by advising you to send Monsieur de Montgomery to Scotland."

"Ah! true, that advice came from you."

"Yes; but you do not know why I gave it."

"No."

"It was because the emperor heard from his astrologer that Monsieur de Montgomery bears between his eyebrows a sign announcing that he will one day prove fatal to a prince of the *fleur de lys*."

"Bah!"

"The august emperor told me to warn your majesty; but as I held Monsieur de Montgomery to be one of your most devoted subjects, I feared to injure him with your majesty, and therefore contented myself with advising you to send him to the assistance of the Regent of Scotland. But now, when after all was believed over, your majesty, by a kind of fatality, challenges him, I tell your majesty, and beg you not to run against Monsieur de Montgomery."

Henri remained silent a moment, then laying his hand on Coligny's shoulder—

"Admiral," replied he, "if you had told me this morning what you have now said, probably I should never have challenged Monsieur de Montgomery; but now to draw back would look like fear, and God is my witness, that I fear nothing in the world. I thank you none the less, admiral, but I must run this last course."

"Sire," said a squire, entering, "Monsieur de Montgomery is armed, and waiting your pleasure."

"Well, then, friend, buckle my helmet, and let the trumpets be sounded."

The helmet was buckled, but the musicians seeing no one appear, and believing the joust over, had quitted their places. This was announced to the king, who replied—

"Then let us run without them."

Then he mounted his horse, and rode out crying—

"Ha! Monsieur de Montgomery, are you ready?"

"Yes, sire," replied the count, advancing also.

"Gentlemen," said the king to the judges, "we wait your signal."

And, amidst a mournful silence, the two rushed forward and met in the middle of the lists. All at once, to the great astonishment of the beholders, the king lost his stirrups and fell forward on his horse's neck, while Montgomery, as though petrified with terror, threw down the piece of broken lance which he held in his hand. M. de Vielleville and M. de Boissy jumped down and ran towards the king, crying—

"For the love of God, what is the matter, sire?"

"That you were right, dear Vielleville, in opposing this accursed joust."

"Are you wounded, sire?"

"Mortally, I believe," murmured he faintly.

Montgomery's lance, gliding along the steel, had raised the king's visor, and a splinter had entered his eye and reached the brain.

Assembling all his strength in one last effort, the king said—

"Do not let Monsieur de Montgomery be molested; it was not his fault."

A cry of terror burst from all the spectators, and all fled in tumult, crying out, "The king is dead!"

CHAPTER LII

THE DEATH-BED

THE king was carried to his room and laid upon the bed. They could not take off the helmet, for the piece of wood

was still in the wound, from which it protruded two or three inches.

Five surgeons were there, but none dared to draw it out; and though Queen Catherine, the dauphin, and the princesses all begged them to make an effort for the relief of the king, they only shook their heads and said—

“Send for Monsieur Ambroise Paré.”

Servants, pages, and squires went off in every direction in search of this surgeon, who had at that time gained a great celebrity.

He was found at last, and appeared in the doorway. He was about forty-five, grave-looking and thoughtful. Every one drew back to give him a passage to the bed, and every eye was fixed on him, as on the only person capable, if any one was so, of saving the king's life. At sight of the wound, M. Paré turned pale.

“Monsieur Ambroise,” said Catherine, “do not forget that it is the king of France we place in your hands.”

Ambroise had already extended his arm towards the bed, but he let it fall again.

“Madame,” said he, “in the state in which the king now is, the real King of France is not your august husband, but his successor; I, therefore, must have permission to treat him as I would the meanest soldier in the army; it is the only chance.”

“There is, then, a hope?”

“I do not say so, madame.”

“Do your best, then,” replied Catherine; “you are known for the most skilful man in the kingdom.”

Ambroise did not reply, but, resting his left hand on the helmet, drew out the piece of wood with the right. Henri gave a shudder and a sigh.

“Now,” said Ambroise, “take off the king's helmet as gently as possible.”

Monsieur de Vielleville attempted to do so, but his hand trembled, so that the surgeon stopped him.

"Let me do it," said he.

And, leaning the king's head on his left arm, he took the helmet off very gently. The rest of the armour presented less difficulty. While it was being removed, the king made not the slightest movement, but appeared for the time perfectly paralysed.

Ambroise Paré now proceeded to examine the wound. A previous examination of the piece of wood had shown him that it had entered about three inches, and the "detritus" clinging round it, that it had reached the brain. He then delicately raised the lips of the wound and found it as he expected—horrible. He then placed over the eye a cold-water bandage, to be removed every quarter of an hour. At the first touch of the cold water there was a slight contraction of the king's features, a proof that life was not extinct, and this gave a gleam of hope to the surgeon, who said—

"Madame, I cannot yet pronounce any opinion as to the ultimate result; all I can say is, that there is no immediate danger or death. Consequently, I advise your majesty to retire and take some repose. As for me, from this moment I will not quit the bedside until the king is dead or cured."

Catherine approached her husband and bent down to kiss his hand, but as she did so, she drew from his finger the famous ring, which was then imagined to be a charm, which secured his love to Diana. The king started, as he had done when the wood was drawn from the wound. Ambroise Paré advanced quickly.

"Pardon, madame," said he; "but what have you done to the king?"

"Nothing, monsieur," said Catherine, hiding the ring; "perhaps the king recognised me,"

She then went out, followed by the dauphin and the other princes and princesses. Outside she met M. de Vielleville, who had gone to change his clothes, which were all covered with the king's blood.

"Where are you going, monsieur?" asked the queen.

"I am grand chamberlain, madame, and my duty is to stay by the king."

"Your duty accords with my wish, monsieur. I have always thought you my good friend."

M. de Vielleville bowed.

"Madame," said he, "I humbly thank your majesty, and will do my best to merit that opinion."

"You have but one thing to do for that purpose, and that is, to prevent Mademoiselle de Valentinois from coming to the king."

"But, madame," said Vielleville, rather embarrassed at this order, which would establish his favour if the king died, but put it in great peril if he recovered, "if Mademoiselle de Valentinois insists?"

"Tell her, my dear count, that while the king is insensible the queen governs, and that it is not her will that the courtesan, Diana de Poitiers, enters the room of her dying husband."

"Diable!" said Vielleville, "they say there is a certain ring——"

"Which is here," interrupted the queen. "I drew it from the finger of my beloved husband; and if his majesty should die, which God forbid, I can sign your brevet as marshal with it."

"Madame," said Vielleville somewhat reassured, "you are the queen, and shall be obeyed."

"Ah! I knew you were my friend," replied she.

The king remained four days motionless. During that time Mademoiselle de Valentinois often presented herself,

but was always refused admittance. Some of her friends advised her to leave the Tournelles and retire to await the event at the Castle of Anet. But she always replied, that her place was near the king; and that, as long as he still breathed, her bitterest enemies dared attempt nothing against her.

On the third evening a man got off a horse, covered with foam, and stopped at the Tournelles, saying that he was sent by King Philip to see Henri, if he still lived.

"What name shall I take to the queen," asked the usher, who had the strictest orders to admit no one.

"It is not to the queen you must carry it, but to Monsieur Paré, my brother doctor. I am called André Vesale."

The usher entered the room, where the king still lay without giving a sign of life, and approaching M. Paré, who, with a skull in his hand, was examining the interior with care, told him the name he had been requested to announce. Ambroise Paré uttered a cry of joy.

"Ah! good news," cried he; "if the king can be saved by human science, this is the man to do it;" and opening the door, he cried, "Enter, enter; you are welcome!" Then to M. de Vielleville he said, "Monsieur le Comte, will you be kind enough to tell the queen that the illustrious André Vesale is here?"

M. de Vielleville, happy to carry good news, went, and passed as he did so a man about forty-six, dark and intelligent-looking. André Vesale enjoyed at that period an immense reputation, and was, therefore, received with great pleasure by a man as modest and conscientious as Paré, who was much superior to Vesale in the dexterity necessary to extract a ball or cut off a limb, but inferior in theory, and especially in anatomy. Indeed, he had made anatomy his special study, and at that period, when popular opinion was so opposed to dissections, he had

exposed himself to the hatred of fanatics for the sake of science, and had made some few steps in advance of the general ignorance. He had studied at Montpellier, where the doctors had obtained from Louis of Anjou the permission to have every year the corpse of a criminal to dissect. At eighteen he came to Paris, and had there braved the dangers attending the stealing of dead bodies. After three years passed in this gloomy work, he had obtained a professorship at Louvaine, and there had permission to give anatomical lectures, which he illustrated by a perfect skeleton which he had in his possession. But he was called before the magistrates to account for the possession of this skeleton. "I brought it from Paris," said he. This was an untruth, but he regarded it as allowable in the interests of humanity. One day, when he was riding with a friend by the place kept for execution, which was about a mile and a half from the town, Vesale saw a body almost reduced to a skeleton. He therefore returned in the night, carried it away, cleaned and put it together again.

Then came the war in Italy between Charles the Fifth and Francis the First, and Vesale followed the Spanish army, as Paré did the French. Here he gave himself up ardently, though secretly, to his favourite study, and at last published and presented to the Prince Philip a manual of anatomy. But from that moment all the professors attacked the book as sacrilege, and sent it to the theologians at Salamanca to decide if it were permitted to Catholics to dissect human bodies. Luckily, the monks replied, "that it was useful, therefore permitted."

This attempt failing, they tried calumny, and spread a report that Vesale, too much in a hurry to wait for the death of a Spanish gentleman, had opened him while still living. It is true that they could not name the gentleman, but the fact was publicly believed, and it required all

the protection of King Philip to shield him from the popular fury. Alas! Philip at last grew tired of sustaining this martyr to science, and Vesale, forced to quit Italy, France, and Spain, undertook a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, but being thrown by contrary winds on the island of Zante, died there of hunger and misery. At the time, however, of which we are writing, the arms which upheld him were not yet tired, and the King of Spain, convinced of the genius of his doctor, sent him to the aid of Henri the Second.

CHAPTER LIII

FLORENTINE POLITICS

ANDRÉ VESALE approached the wounded man, looked at him, inquired what had been his treatment, approved of it in all points, and then desired to see the piece of wood drawn from the king's eye, and inquired how it had penetrated; whether horizontally, diagonally, or obliquely.

Paré replied obliquely; and then, taking the skull, put into the eye the piece of wood, as well as he could recollect, in the exact position in which it had entered the king's.

"I was busy," said he, "examining the interior of the head, to ascertain, if possible, the amount of injury the king has sustained."

"It is needless," said Vesale. "I know exactly what must have happened."

And he then described to his colleague his idea on the subject.

"It is wonderful!" said Paré. "That is exactly what I have traced on the skull. Well, what do you think of the wound?"

"It is mortal," said Vesale.

A feeble cry was heard behind them. Catherine de Medicis had entered, unperceived by them, and had heard the opinion just expressed.

"Mortal, do you say, monsieur?" said she.

"I think it my duty, madame, to repeat to you what I have just said to Monsieur Paré. The death of a king is no ordinary event, and those who are to inherit the empire should be warned of it. However painful it may be, I repeat, then, madame, that the king's wound is mortal."

"But," said Catherine, "will he die without having recovered his senses?"

Vesale approached the bed, took the king's hand, and felt his pulse.

"No," said he.

"Then the fever has diminished," said Paré; "it has been up to one hundred and ten."

"Madame," said Vesale, "if this improvement continues, it is probable that the king will speak before he dies."

"And when?" asked Catherine.

"Ah! madame, you ask more than science can tell. However, my opinion is, that it will probably be to-morrow."

"Vielleville, you hear?" said the queen. "At the first sign of life let me know. I must be present to hear what the king says."

The next day, about two in the afternoon, the pulse sunk to sixty-two. The wounded man made a slight movement, and uttered a feeble sigh.

"Monsieur de Vielleville," said Vesale, "call her majesty the queen; the king, I believe, is about to revive and speak."

Monsieur de Vielleville went, and, as he returned, Henri muttered, in a half-intelligible manner, the words—

The queen! Let them go and fetch the queen."

"Here I am, sire," cried Catherine, falling on her knees beside the bed.

Ambroise Paré looked with wonder at the man, who, if he could not command life and death, seemed at least initiated into all their secrets.

"Does your majesty wish us to retire?" said Vesale.

"No; let them stop," murmured Henri. "Besides, I am so weak that, from one moment to the other, I fear to faint."

Then Vesale drew from his pocket a little phial containing a red liquor, and, putting some drops in a cup, introduced it between the king's lips. Henri uttered a sigh of satisfaction, and a faint look of life returned to his face.

"Ah!" said he, "I feel better."

Then, looking round him—

"You here, Vielleville? you have not left me?"

"Not for a minute, sire," replied Vielleville, with a sob.

"You told me, but I would not believe," murmured Henri; "I was wrong. Nor you either, madame. Monsieur de Coligny, also, is my true friend. He told me more than any of you, for he named Montgomery as the man who would kill me."

"He named Montgomery?" cried Catherine. "How did he know——"

"By a prophecy made to the Emperor Charles the Fifth. Apropos, I hope that Monsieur de Montgomery is free."

Catherine did not reply.

"I hope he is," continued Henri. "I ask, and even exact that no harm shall be done to him."

"Yes, sire," replied Vielleville, "De Montgomery is free. He sends every hour to ask for news of your majesty. He is in despair."

"Let him console himself. Poor De Lorges! He has always served me faithfully."

"I wish he had stayed in Scotland," murmured Catherine.

"It was an order from me that brought him back. I challenged him to fight ; my ill-luck did all, and not him. And now, let me profit by this moment of life, which God grants me, to regulate the most pressing business."

"Oh ! monseigneur !" murmured Catherine.

"First, let us think of the promises made to our friends, and then of the treaties with our enemies. You know what was promised to Vielleville."

"Yes, sire."

"His brevet as marshal of France. It must be all ready."

"Yes, sire," replied Vielleville, "your majesty had the kindness to order me to have it ready, on that fatal day of the 30th of June ; and, as since that time I have never left you, I have it still about me."

And, drawing it out, he presented it to the king.

"I cannot move without great pain, madame," said Henri ; "have the goodness to sign this brevet for me, to date it from to-day, and to name the cause why I do not do it myself."

The Comte de Vielleville burst into tears, and, throwing himself down by the king's bed, kissed his hand.

Meanwhile, Catherine wrote at the bottom of the brevet—

"For the wounded king, by his orders, and by his bedside.
CATHERINE, 4th July, 1559."

"Is that right, sire ? " said she, showing it to Henri.

"Yes, madame ; and, now, give it to Vielleville."

Catherine gave it, but whispered as she did so—

"You have the brevet. But none the less, keep your promise, my good friend, for it may be withdrawn."

"Be easy, madame, you have my promise," replied he.

"Now," said Henri, "are Monsieur Savoie and my sister married?"

"No, sire," replied Catherine, "it would have been a strange time for a wedding."

"On the contrary, I wish them to be married as soon as possible. Vielleville, go and fetch Monsieur de Savoie and my sister."

Catherine accompanied De Vielleville to the door.

"Count," said she, "do not fetch them until I open this door. Wait in that ante-chamber, and, for your life, not a word of the king's return to consciousness—above all, to Mademoiselle de Valentinois."

"Do not fear, madame."

And Vielleville began to walk up and down the room.

"Where are you going, madame?" said Henri; "I do not wish to lose time."

"Here I am, monsieur. I was telling Monsieur de Vielleville where he would find the duke if he were not at home. But he will be, doubtless; it is only at night he leaves the castle, and returns at daybreak."

"Ah!" said the king, with a sigh, "there was a time when I also wandered about on fine nights on a good horse, *per amica silentia lunæ*, as my Marie says. It was sweet to feel the fresh breeze and to see the foliage tremble in the pale light of the moon. Ah! this fever did not burn me up then. My God, have pity on me, for I suffer much."

Meanwhile, Catherine had signed to the two physicians to retire, and they went and stood in a window, out of ear shot.

"Well," said the king, looking towards the door, "are they coming?"

"Yes, sire; but, before they do come, will your majesty permit me to say a few words?"

"Yes, madame, although I am very tired, and seem to see things only through a cloud."

"Never mind. God will clear away those clouds, and permit you perhaps to judge more wisely than when you were in perfect health."

Henri turned his eyes on Catherine, burning with fever, making a great effort to raise his mind to the point of hers, of which he had had more than once occasion to appreciate the depth and cunning.

"Speak!" said he.

"Pardon me, sire; it is not my opinion, nor that of your doctors, but it is, I believe, your own, that your wound is mortal."

"It is so, and I consider it a miracle that I am now permitted to hold this last conversation."

"Sire, you remember what Monsieur de Guise said to you, when you were about to sign this unlucky treaty of Cateau-Cambresis?"

"Yes."

"Monsieur de Guise is a good friend to France."

"A Lorraine!"

"But I, sire, am no Lorraine."

"No; but you are——"

"A Florentine, and, as such, a true ally of France. Well! I tell you, sire, that the Florentine and the Lorraine have been truer friends to France than some Frenchmen."

"I do not say no."

"We said to you, 'Such a treaty might have been, perhaps, accepted the day after the battle of Saint Laurent, but now, that we have re-taken Calais, and have fifty thousand armed men in the field and thirty thousand in garrison, such a treaty is an absurdity.' This is what we said, but you would not listen."

"It is true—I was wrong."

"You confess it," said Catherine, with beaming eyes.

"Yes, I confess it ; but it is too late."

"It is never too late, sire."

"I do not understand."

"Will you let me act? Will you trust to me? I will restore to France all its towns, Piedmont, Nice, La Bresse, and open the road to the Milanais."

"And what must I do for that?"

"You must, in spite of the majority of the dauphin, yet in consideration of his feeble health and little knowledge of business, name a regency to last one year, or more if needful, to consist of Monsieur de Guise, the Cardinal of Lorraine, and myself, who will alone regulate all civil, political, and religious matters."

"And what would François say?"

"He would be too happy. He thinks only of his wife, and desires nothing more."

"True, it is a great happiness to be young and to love your wife"—and he sighed—"but there is one thing against it: that he is King of France, and must think of his country before his love."

Catherine felt inclined to say, "O, king! who gives such good counsel, why did you not follow it?" But she restrained herself, and said—

"And then we will do all."

"How?"

"Break off the treaty, and re-take all the towns."

"Yes; and I, meanwhile, should present myself before God, loaded with perjury, having taken my death for a pretext not to keep my promise. It is too great a sin, madame. If I were to live, it might be different."

Then, raising his voice—

"Monsieur de Vielleville," cried he.

"What are you doing?" cried Catherine.

"I am calling Monsieur de Vielleville, who is certainly not gone to Monsieur de Savoie."

Vielleville, hearing himself called, now entered.

"Monsieur de Vielleville," said Henri, "you did well to wait for a second order, since the queen told you to wait, but this second order I now give. Go at once, and let them be with us here in five minutes."

Then, looking round, and seeing that the doctors had drawn near on hearing his voice—

"Just now, some one gave me a liquid which did me good. I want to live another hour. Give me a few more drops."

Vesale took the spoon, poured into it five or six drops of the red liquid, which he gave to the king, while Ambroise Paré raised his head by putting his hands under the pillow.

Meanwhile, Monsieur de Vielleville had gone to fetch the Duke of Savoy and Marguerite, while Catherine stood by the bed smiling, but with rage in her heart.

CHAPTER LIV

A KING OF FRANCE MUST KEEP HIS WORD

FIVE minutes after, Emmanuel entered by one door and Marguerite by another. They both looked very joyful at the king's return to consciousness; and, indeed, thanks to the cordial he had just taken, there seemed, for the time, to be a remarkable improvement in him. Catherine stepped back to yield them her place by the bed, and both knelt down.

"That is well," said Henri; "remain as you are."

"Oh! sire," said Emmanuel, "we are rejoiced to see this change."

"My good brother, what happiness!" said Marguerite.

"Yes," said Henri, "it is a happiness, and I thank God for it, that I have recovered my senses. But there is no hope; think not, therefore, of what cannot be, but act like those whose time is short. Emmanuel, take my sister's hand."

Emmanuel obeyed, and Marguerite's hand met him half way.

"Prince," continued Henri, "I desired your marriage with Marguerite when I was well. Now, that I am dying, I do so still more earnestly."

"Sire!"

"My dear brother!" said Marguerite, kissing his hand.

"Listen," said Henri, solemnly, "listen, Emmanuel; not only are you now a great prince—thanks to the provinces I have restored to you—a noble gentleman, through your ancestors, but you are an honourable man—thanks to your right feeling and generous heart. Emmanuel, it is to the man of honour I address myself."

Emmanuel raised his noble head—the goodness of his soul shining in his eyes, and, in his own sweet, yet firm voice, said—

"Speak, sire."

"Emmanuel," continued the king, "a peace has just been signed disadvantageous to France—but, never mind, it is signed. This peace makes you at once the ally of France and Spain. You are cousin to King Philip, but you will be uncle to the King François; your sword is now of great weight in the scale in which God weighs the destinies of nations. Well, I adjure this sword to be as just as its master is true, as terrible as its master is courageous. If the peace sworn between me and Philip is broken by France, let it turn against France; but if by Spain, against Spain. Were the office of constable vacant, I would give it to you, as to the prince who has married my sister, to

the defender of the frontiers of my kingdom. It is held, however, by a man from whom I ought perhaps to take it, but who has always tried to serve me faithfully. Never mind, you need hold yourself engaged by nothing but justice and right ; on whichever side that lies, draw your sword. Will you swear to do this ? ”

Emmanuel extended his hand.

“ I swear it,” said he.

“ I thank you. And now, on what day will all the formalities necessary to your marriage be complete ? ”

“ On the 9th of July, sire.”

“ Swear to me, then, that whether I am alive or dead, in my bed or in my tomb, the wedding shall be celebrated on that day.”

Marguerite cast a rapid and rather anxious glance at Emmanuel. But he, drawing her towards him, kissed her forehead, and said—

“ Sire, receive this second oath as you did the first. I swear both with equal solemnity, and may God perish me if I fail in either.”

Marguerite turned very pale.

At that moment the door half opened, and the head of the dauphin showed itself.

“ Who is there ? ” said the king.

“ Oh ! my father speaks ! ” cried the dauphin, rushing in. Henri’s face lighted up.

“ Yes, my son,” said he, “ and you are welcome here, for I have something to say to you.”

Then to the duke—

“ Emmanuel, embrace your nephew.”

The duke took the lad in his arms and kissed him.

“ You will remember your oaths, brother ? ”

“ Yes, sire, faithfully.”

“ Now, then, leave me alone with François,”

Emmanuel and Marguerite retired, but Catherine kept her place.

"Well, madame," said the king.

"I also, sire?" said she.

"Yes, madame."

"When your majesty desires to see me again, you will send for me."

"When this interview is over you can return, whether I call you or not. Probably I shall not, for I feel very weak. But come."

When she was gone, Henri said to the dauphin, "Is your mother gone, François?"

"Yes, sire."

"Lock the door, and then come here, for I feel my strength failing me."

François hastily turned the key, and running back, said, "Oh ! mon Dieu ! father, you are very pale. What can I do for you?"

"First call the doctor."

"Gentlemen ! come here at once !" cried the dauphin.

"Strength," said Henri ; "give me strength."

"Sire," said Vesale, hesitating.

"Have you no more of that elixir?"

"Yes, sire, I have some."

"Well, then?"

"But, sire, it gives you only a fictitious strength."

"What does that matter?"

"Its abuse might shorten your majesty's life."

"Monsieur, the question now can only be of a few days ; let me be able to tell the dauphin what I wish to say, and I care not if I die at the last word."

"Sire, give me an order, then, for I gave you the last dose with hesitation."

"Give it to me, again, I order you."

And his head fell back on the pillow, his eyes closed,

and so mortal a paleness spread itself over his face, that all thought he was going to die.

"My father is dying!" cried the dauphin.

"The king has still three or four days to live; do not fear," replied Vesale; and without waiting for a spoon he poured a few drops from the bottle into the king's mouth. The effect was slower this time, but not less certain. After a few seconds the blood appeared to circulate afresh through the veins of the patient, the teeth unclosed, and the eyes opened.

"Thank God!" murmured Henri, looking for the dauphin.

"Here I am, father," said the young prince, kneeling down by the bedside.

"Paré," said Henri, "raise me with the pillows, and put my arm round the dauphin's neck, that I may lean on him as I descend these last steps to the tomb."

Vesale then slipped the cushions from a sofa behind those of the king, so as to raise him, while Ambroise placed round the dauphin's neck the half paralysed arm of the king. Then they retired, and the lips of the father and son met.

"My father!" murmured the lad, while large tears rolled down his cheeks.

"My son!" said the king, "you are now sixteen; I shall speak to you as to a man."

"Sire!"

"Yet, more, you are a king, for I now count for nothing in this world. I have committed, my son, through weakness, never through hatred or wickedness, many faults in my life."

François was about to speak.

"Let me finish, François. I must confess to you, my successor, that you may avoid the faults into which I have fallen."

"It was not you who committed these faults, father."

"No, my child, but I am answerable for them before God and man. One of the last and greatest has been omitted at the instigation of Mademoiselle de Valentinois and the constable. I had a bandage over my eyes—I was mad. I ask your pardon, my son."

"Oh, father!"

"This was the peace signed with Spain—the abandonment of Piedmont, Savoy, the Milanais, and one hundred and ninety places, in exchange for which we receive only Saint Quentin, Ham, and Le Catelet. Just now, your mother was here, reproaching me with this, and offering me reparation."

"But how, sire, since your word is pledged?"

"Good, François; yes, the fault is great, but my word is given. François, whatever they tell you, whatever seduction they employ, whether of women or priests; should they even call up by the aid of magic, my ghost to make you believe it to be my wish, do not change this treaty—all the more because it is disastrous; and remember ever the maxim of King John, 'A king of France must keep his word.'"

"My father, I swear to do as you desire."

"If your mother insists?"

"I shall tell her that I am your son as well as hers."

"And if she orders?"

"I will reply that I am king, and that it is for me to give orders."

And he drew himself up with that majesty peculiar to the Valois.

"Good, my son; that is what I had to say. And now, adieu, for I feel that I grow weak. Repeat on my body the oath you have just made. Adieu, François, adieu, my son; embrace me for the last time; you are king of France."

And Henri fell back pale and motionless on his pillow. François then repeated once more his oath to hold intact the treaty of Cateau-Cambresis, and then opened the door to his mother, who was waiting impatiently for the end of this interview.

On the 9th, by the bed of the king, who still breathed, although giving no other signs of life, Emmanuel was married to Marguerite by the Cardinal de Lorraine. The ceremony was afterwards finished a little after midnight, in the church of Saint Paul. On the next day, just ten days after he received the fatal blow, Henri expired without effort or convulsion. He was forty years old, and had reigned twelve years and three months. On the same day, Mademoiselle de Valentinois, who had remained at the Tournelles till the last moment, retired to her château at Anet. All the court returned to the Louvre, the two doctors remained to embalm the body, and four priests to pray over it.

At the door of the Louvre, Catherine de Medicis and Marie Stuart met. Catherine, according to habit, was about to go in first; then she stopped, drew back, and said with a sigh,

“Pass, madame, you are the queen.”

CHAPTER LV

IN WHICH THE TREATY IS EXECUTED

ON the 3rd of August, 1559, the letters patent which restored to Emmanuel all his estates were sent off.

“The affair,” says Brantôme, “was much discussed, and many thought that Francis the Second was not obliged

to fulfil the engagements sworn to by his father, above all to an inferior power; and they said that the Duchess of Savoy had already brought too great advantages to her husband, and that the establishment of ten daughters of France should not have cost more to the crown."

Three successive orders had to be sent to Marshal Bourdillon before he would evacuate the places he held. He exacted that the order should be registered.

As for Emmanuel, however anxious he might be to return to his own estates, he was detained by various things. Firstly, he had to go to Brussels to take leave of King Philip, and to resign to him the government of the Netherlands. Philip named his sister Margaret, Duchess of Parma, governor in Emmanuel's stead, and then set off for Spain with his young wife. Emmanuel then returned to Paris to be present at the coronation of the young king, who immediately after retired to the château of Villes Coterets, to amuse himself at his ease. Here Emmanuel, who accompanied him, fell ill of a fever, and Marguerite, who adored her handsome husband, nursed him with the utmost devotion. Luckily the fever was only the result of fatigue and regrets; Emmanuel had regained a duchy, but he had lost his Leona, who had returned to the village of Oleggio to await that 17th of November on which she was to see him again.

At last the powerful fairy called Youth, vanquished fever and grief, and on the 24th of September Emmanuel was able to accompany François and Marie (whose united ages amounted to thirty-two) to Rheims. He then took leave of them, and set off for his own duchy. Marguerite accompanied him to Lyons, but there they separated, Emmanuel being unwilling to bring his bride to his states until they were brought into some order; besides, November was drawing near.

Scianca-Ferro returned with Marguerite to Paris, while

the duke went on to Marseilles, where a troop of Savoy gentlemen awaited him.

Francis the Second sent him there the collar of the order of Saint Michel, which he afterwards wore with the torson d'or.

From Marseilles he went to Nice, and, with no little pride, re-entered as a triumphant prince the castle where he had once fled when a feeble child. Here he received an exact account of the state of his provinces.

The country was ruined; neither Piedmont or Savoy had any fortified towns, the French having destroyed all but the citadels of the five towns, which they were to keep till the Duchess of Savoy had a son. All the princely houses were dilapidated, and their furniture destroyed, and most of the prince's jewels had long before been turned into money.

To face this penury, the duke had only six hundred thousand crowns, proceeding from Marguerite's dowry, and the ransom of Montmorency and Coligny.

Absence and misfortune also, which dissolve so many loves and devotions, had produced their usual effect; the nobility, who had not seen Emmanuel since his childhood, had forgotten him, and become accustomed to live as a kind of free confederation. Great numbers of them had attached themselves either to France or Spain; the people had become accustomed to the presence of the French, who had treated them with great moderation; they had no police, and each man lived as he liked.

The few days, however, that Emmanuel passed at Nice were days of joy; it seemed like father and children meeting after a long absence.

Another cause of discord were the religionists of Piedmont, who professed to hold the doctrines of the primitive church. Persecutions and butcheries had been

carried on against them for four centuries, without effect, and when Luther and Calvin appeared, these Vaudois had joined themselves to them, and become a party in the state. During the misfortunes of Charles the Third, they had spread much and gained many partisans, but both Francis the First and Henri the Second had carried on vigorous measures of persecution against them.

CHAPTER LVI

THE SEVENTEENTH OF NOVEMBER

ON the 17th of November, Emmanuel, wrapped in a great cloak, got off his horse at the door of a little house in Oleggio, and received in his arms the half-fainting form of Leona.

Five months had passed since they had met, and in that time a great change had taken place in Leona. This change was such as takes place in a flower, which, accustomed to air and sunshine, is suddenly transported to darkness and shade; in a bird, the free denizen of the air, when shut up in a cage; the flower would lose its colours, and the bird its song. Leona's cheeks had grown pale, her look sad, and her voice grave.

After the first few minutes, given to the happiness of meeting again, Emmanuel looked at her anxiously, for sorrow had left its unmistakable mark upon her. She smiled at his look.

"I know what you are looking for," said she; "for the page of the Duke of Savoy, the joyous companion of Nice, for poor Leone. He is dead, you will find him no more; but there remains his sister Leona, to whom he has bequeathed the love and devotion he felt for you."

"Oh! what matters?" said he, "it is Leona I love, and ever shall."

"Love her well," said the young girl, with the same melancholy.

"What do you mean?"

"My father died at an early age; my mother also died young; in a year, I shall have attained her age."

Emmanuel pressed her with a shudder to his heart. "What do you say, Leona?" cried he.

"Nothing very frightful, since I am now sure that God permits the dead to watch over the living."

"I do not understand you, Leona," said Emmanuel, uneasily.

"How much time have you to give me, my beloved?"

"Oh! do you not remember we agreed to pass twenty-four hours together?"

"Yes. Well, then, to-morrow I will tell you. From now till then let us live in the past. I have no future." Leona had been but a short time at Oleggio, and was yet unknown to every one, and Emmanuel, who had not been in Piedmont since his childhood, was still less known. The peasants, therefore, saw this handsome pair pass by without knowing who they were. Where were they going? Leona was leading Emmanuel. From time to time they stopped, and approached a group of peasants.

"Of what are you talking, friends?" she asked.

"What should we talk of, pretty lady, but of the return of our prince to his states?"

"Well, and what do you think of him, my friends?" said Emmanuel.

"We think nothing of him, for we do not know him."

"You know him by renown," said Leona.

"Yes, as a brave captain; but what do we care for brave captains? To sustain their reputation, they make

war, and war desolates our fields, depopulates our villages, and throws our daughters and wives into mourning."

"Then you desire peace?" said Emmanuel.

"Yes, peace and justice."

"In the name of the duke, I promise you that," said Leona, "for Prince Emmanuel is not only a brave captain, but a good man."

"Then," cried the peasants, "long live our young duke!"

When they were gone, Emmanuel pressed her to his heart. "Oh! my beloved Leona," said he, "why can I not thus with you, make the tour of my states?"

"My heart will be always with you," said she.

When they left the village, "I should have wished," said she, "to lead you where we are going by a flowery path, but you see the earth and sky together join to celebrate our anniversary: the earth is sad, like death; the sun brilliant, like life. Do you recognise the place where you found life and death together?"

"Ah! it was here," said he.

"Yes, it was here you found us."

Emmanuel cut a branch of willow, and planted it where her mother lay. Leona gathered a few late autumn flowers, while Emmanuel leaned pensively against the tree.

"Oh!" cried he, suddenly, drawing Leona to him again, "you are the angel who has guided me from that hour to this."

"And I will continue my task in the world of spirits," said she.

Emmanuel looked again anxiously at her: as she stood there, she looked already more like a spirit than a living creature.

"Ah! you begin to understand me," said she. "Not being able to be yours, and not having strength to live here, I am going to God."

"Leona, Leona, is that what you promised me?"

"It is much more," replied she; "I promised, my much loved duke, to see you once a year, but I find that not enough; I have prayed God to let me die, that I may quit you no more."

Emmanuel shuddered. "Die!" cried he. "But how know you what lies beyond? Have you penetrated the mystery of the grave, that you speak thus?"

"An angel has come to me, and conversed with me."

"Mon Dieu! Leona, your mind wanders," cried Emmanuel in terror.

Leona smiled. "I have seen my mother," said she.

"Your mother!"

"Yes," replied she, quietly.

"And when?"

"Last night."

"Where?"

"At midnight, near my bed."

"You saw her?"

"Yes."

"And she spoke to you."

"She did."

The prince pressed Leona to his heart as though to make sure she was not a spirit.

"Tell me all," said he.

"Since you left me, Emmanuel, I have dreamed every night of the only people I ever loved in the world, you and my mother."

"My Leona!"

"But that was but dreaming: last night I had a vision. I slept, and was awoke by a feeling of cold; I opened my eyes, and saw a woman dressed in white, and veiled, by my bed; she had just kissed me on the forehead. I was about to cry out, but she raised her veil, and I recognised my mother."

"Leona, do you know what you are saying?"

She smiled. "I extended my arms to embrace her, but she made a sign, and they fell powerless. I could not move, but I murmured 'mother.' I was not afraid, I was happy."

"And you say she spoke to you?"

"Yes. She said, 'My daughter, this is not the first time God has permitted me to see you since my death, for often in your sleep I have glided between the curtains to look at you; but this is the first time I have been permitted to speak.'

"Speak, mother, I listen," replied I.

"My daughter," said she, "since you have sacrificed your love, God not only pardons you, but permits you to warn the duke of every great danger that shall threaten him. To-morrow, when he comes to see you, you shall tell him of your holy mission, and as he will doubt——"

"Indeed, Leona! what you tell me is so extraordinary, that I cannot but doubt."

"As he will doubt," continued the phantom, "tell him that when the bird perches on the willow branch that he has just cut, and sings, Scianca-Ferro will arrive at Verceil, with a letter from the duchess Marguerite.' Then she lowered her veil, murmuring, 'Adieu, my daughter, we shall meet again,' and vanished."

Just as Leona finished speaking, a strange bird perched on the willow branch, and began to sing.

Leona smiled, and said, "Look, prince, Scianca-Ferro is now entering Verceil, and you will find him there to-morrow."

"If that be true, it is a miracle," said he.

"And then you will believe?"

"Yes."

"And will do what I tell you when the time comes?"

"It would be sacrilege not to do so."

"That is all I had to say; now, let us go in."

"Poor child!" murmured the duke; "no wonder you are so pale, having received the kiss of the dead."

The next day, on reaching Verceil, Emmanuel found Scianca-Ferro was waiting for him. He had arrived the afternoon before with a letter from the duchess.

CHAPTER LVII

THE DEAD KNOW ALL

THE letter of the Princess Marguerite was accompanied by a sum of three hundred thousand crowns. The Marshal de Bourdillon, who, doubtless, acted on secret orders from the Duc de Guise, refused to quit his garrison until the arrears of his men were paid. Seeing that the French did not evacuate Piedmont, Emmanuel wrote to Francis the Second about it. The answer came from Marguerite.

"As," said she, "it is incontestable that it is France and not you who should pay these soldiers, I send you the one hundred thousand crowns, the price of my maiden jewels, chiefly given to me by my father."

The French troops were therefore paid, and garrisons left only in the five reserved towns.

Emmanuel then returned to Nice, and thence to Paris, whence he rejoined Marguerite. There was, however, much to do in his states. All who had remained faithful to him were promoted to honour, and magistrates were appointed everywhere. The war was carried on for a time against the Vaudois, but by the end of another year all was quiet, and a kind of compromise effected, by which the most ardent of the priests were banished, and the people then left to worship as they would.

On the 12th of November, 1560, he set off for Verceil, and on the 17th was at Oleggio. Leona waited for him, as before, at the door. Fearful of the first impression of her changed looks on her lover, she had drawn her veil down. Emmanuel shuddered at the sight; she looked like the veiled figure she had described to him. He lifted her veil with a trembling hand, and the tears gushed from his eyes. Leona's skin was as white as Parian marble, her whole look was of a person barely alive. A slight colour rushed to her cheeks at seeing Emmanuel; her heart still lived, and each beat said, "I love you." A collation was prepared, but Leona did not touch it; she scarcely seemed to belong to earth, or its wants.

After breakfast she took Emmanuel's arm, and they set off for the same walk as they had taken on the preceding year. This time there were no groups of anxious peasants about, discussing their new duke. Except the war in the valleys, which had been little felt beyond them, all had been peace. The French garrisons had quitted the towns which they had so long ruined, and justice was administered impartially to all. Now, therefore, every one was at his work, the labourers in the fields, the workmen in their shops.

After passing through the village, they reached the place where the duke had planted the willow, and where he had subsequently caused a chapel to be erected. In a golden niche was a silver figure of the Virgin and Son, and before this Emmanuel knelt and prayed. Leona stood by him; and when he had finished, she said, "My beloved duke, you promised me a year ago in this place, that if, on your return to the château of Verceil, you found there, as I announced to you, Scianca-Ferro, with a letter from the duchess, you would believe henceforth all I might say, however strange it might seem."

"Yes, I promised ; I do not forget."

"Was he there?"

"He was."

"Did he arrive at the time I named?"

"Precisely."

"Did he bring a letter from the duchess?"

"It was the first thing he gave me when I saw him."

"You are, then, ready to follow my counsels?"

"When you speak, my Leona, it seems to me as though an angel spoke through your mouth."

"Listen, then. I have seen my mother again."

Emmanuel shuddered.

"When?" said he.

"Last night."

"And what——"

"You doubt still?" said Leona, smiling. "This time I will begin with the proof. Before leaving Verceil, you wrote to the princess to come to you."

"It is true!" replied he, with astonishment.

"You told her that you would meet her at Nice, whither she could come by sea from Marseilles. You added, that from thence you would take her to Genoa."

"Mon Dieu!"

"And thence by the beautiful valley of Bormida to Turin."

"It is all true, Leona ; but no one but myself knew the contents of the letter, and I confided it to a courier of whom I am sure."

"Did I not tell you that I saw my mother last night? and the dead know all."

Emmanuel, a prey to an involuntary terror, murmured—

"I must believe."

*

"Well, dear Emmanuel, this is what she said further—
'To-morrow you will see the duke ; make him promise to

go by night with the duchess by Tenda and Coni, while he sends an empty litter, escorted by Scianca-Ferro and one hundred armed men by land. It concerns the safety of Savoy.' Now, dear Emmanuel, you must swear to me to follow this advice."

The duke hesitated a moment. His reason as a man, and his pride as a soldier, equally revolted, and strove against his promised word.

"Emmanuel," said Leona, "perhaps it is the last thing I shall ask you."

Emmanuel extended his hand towards the chapel and swore.

CHAPTER LVIII

THE ROAD FROM SAINT REMO TO ALBERGA

EMMANUEL had given the rendezvous to his duchess at Nice; first, in order to confer a new favour on his faithful city, and next, as he was to arrive in January, to show her his duchy in its most smiling aspect, through the eternal spring of Nice and Oneglia. She arrived on the 15th, and she and the duke remained four months in Nice, while the duke expedited the construction of the galleys that he had ordered.

A Calabrian corsair, called Achiali, had been making descents upon Corsica; and people even pretended to have seen a suspicious-looking vessel in the river at Genoa. At last, about the beginning of March, Emmanuel decided that they should set out.

The duke was to go on horseback, and the duchess in a litter from Saint Remo to Alberga, and the departure was fixed for the 15th of March. At daybreak the *cortège*

left the castle at Nice, with fifty armed men before the litter and fifty after, and they stopped on the first night at Saint Remo.

The next day they set off again, breakfasted at Oneglia, and then continued their journey. A little beyond Porto Mansisio the road lay between two mountains, through a narrow defile, a good place for an ambush. The duke sent on twenty men, although it seemed a needless precaution in these times of peace. The men passed safely, and then the rest of the procession passed on. But just as the duke and the litter entered the defile, a terrible fire was directed against them; the duke's horse was wounded, one of those harnessed to the litter fell dead, and a cry was heard through the curtains. At the same time wild shouts were heard, and they were assailed by a band of men in Moorish costume. They had fallen among a hoard of pirates.

One of the assailants, mounted on a magnificent Arab horse, and covered from head to foot with a Turkish coat of mail, rushed upon the duke, crying—

“Duke Emmanuel, you shall not escape me this time.”

“Nor you me,” replied the duke. Then, calling to his men, “Soldiers, do your best, I will set you an example.”

He fired at the pirate. A terrible combat commenced. Each showered blows on the other; but the armour resisted every blow. In the midst of the fight the duke felt his wounded horse giving way; he therefore called up all his strength for a blow at his adversary. The pirate threw himself backwards to avoid the blow, and the horse received it between his ears. Believing his horse killed, he threw himself off just as that of the duke's fell. Each ran to his saddle and seized his axe.

Never did Cyclops give ruder blows. But soon the advantage began to declare itself for the duke; although a great part of his helmet had been hacked away, the steel points of his club had made terrible inroads in the pirate's

coat of mail. Also, while the duke still appeared fresh and vigorous, his adversary's strength seemed nearly exhausted; his breath came quick, and his blows were less rapid and vigorous. He began to fall back step by step, and as he went he approached the edge of a precipice, while he seemed not to perceive it. So they went on, one retreating and the other pursuing, until within two steps of the edge, when, suddenly throwing away his axe, the pirate seized his adversary by the body, exclaiming—

“Ah! Duke Emmanuel, we shall die together!”

But a burst of laughter replied to him—

“I had recognised you, bastard of Waldeck,” cried his adversary, unclasping the iron chain of his arms. Then raising his visor, “I am not Duke Emmanuel,” said he, “and you shall not have the honour of dying by his hands.”

“Scianca-Ferro!” cried De Waldeck; “malediction on you and your duke!”

And he stooped to pick up his axe; but during this moment, rapid as it was, Scianca's club fell on his head. De Waldeck uttered a sigh, and fell.

“Ah! this time, brother Emmanuel, you are not here to keep me from crushing the viper,” said he; so taking up a huge piece of rock, he smashed the head of his enemy in the helmet.

Then with another burst of laughter, he added—

“What pleases me most is, that he dies in the armour of an infidel.”

Then, recalling the faint cry he had heard from the litter, he ran to it and drew back the curtains.

On all sides the pirates fled.

Meanwhile Emmanuel and the princess were quietly pursuing the way by Tenda and Coni. The duke, however, was anxious. What could have been Leona's reason for exacting this change of route? what danger did he run

in following the other? and if there were danger, would it not fall on Scianca-Ferro?

The supper was sad, for Marguerite was fatigued, and Emmanuel made a pretext of feeling so also, to retire early to his own room.

Eleven o'clock struck; Emmanuel opened his window: the heavens were clear and starry, the air calm and pure. A bird sang near, whose note sounded to the duke like the one he had heard at Oleggio.

In about half an hour he closed the window and sat down. His eyes grew heavy; he heard, vaguely, midnight strike, and then saw his door open and a shadow enter and advance towards him. The shade approached, and bending over him murmured his name, while an icy sensation on the forehead made him shudder.

"Leona!" cried he. It was indeed Leona near him; but this time without breath from her lips, or light in her eyes, while some drops of blood fell from a wound she had received in her breast. He held out his arms to her, but she made a sign, and they fell powerless. "I told you, my Emmanuel," murmured the vision, in a soft voice, "that I should visit you when dead."

"Oh! why have you left me, Leona?" cried Emmanuel despairingly.

"Because my mission was accomplished on earth, my beloved. But before I mount to the skies, God permits me to visit you, and to console you by telling you that you will have a son. The dead know all. We shall meet in heaven."

And she disappeared.

The duke, who had till then been chained to his seat, now rushed to the door, crying, "Leona! Leona! shall I see you again?"

And he fancied that a faint tone replied, "Yes."

The next day, instead of continuing his journey, the duke

stopped at Coni, feeling certain that he had tidings to hear. Indeed, about two o'clock Scianca-Ferro arrived.

"Leona is dead!" was Emmanuel's first word.

"She died last night at twelve o'clock; but how do you know?"

"From a wound in the breast," continued Emmanuel.

"A ball destined for the duchess."

"And who," cried Emmanuel, "is the wretch who attempted the life of a woman?"

"The bastard of Waldeck," replied Scianca.

"Oh! let him never fall into my hands," said the duke.

"I had sworn to you, Emmanuel, that the first time I met the serpent I would crush him, and I have done it."

"Nothing, then, remains but to pray for Leona," said Emmanuel.

"It is not for us to pray for the angels, but for the angels to pray for us," replied Scianca.

On the 12th of January, 1562, the Princess Marguerite gave birth, at the Castle of Rivoli, to a son, who was called Charles Emmanuel, and who reigned fifty years. Three months after his birth, the French evacuated Cateau-Cambresis, Turin, Chieri, Chivas, and Villeneuve d'Asti.

CHAPTER LIX

EPILOGUE

ON a fine morning in the beginning of September, 1580, that is, about twenty years after the events just recorded twenty of the guards of Henri the Third, who were called, when together, the forty-five guardsmen, were waiting in the courtyard of the Louvre for the time when the king

should summon them to go to mass, for it was one of his manias to busy himself not only with the care of his own soul, but with those of others. The life led by these young men was not amusing; the rule of the Louvre was almost as strict as that of a convent, and they were driven to numerous expedients to pass the time. It was not, therefore, astonishing that, catching sight of an old man with one eye, one leg, and one arm, who was asking charity, they should call him in and question him. He appeared about sixty; his face was covered with sabre wounds, and his head with scars.

Questions fell on him as thick as hail.

"What is your name? How old are you? In what fight did you lose your eye? Where did you lose your leg? Have you lost your tongue also?"

"No, thank God, gentlemen; it remains to thank you, if you will show kindness to an old captain of adventurers."

"You a captain! You cannot make us believe that!" cried one.

"That, at least, was the title often given to me by Duc François de Guise, whom I aided to retake Calais; by the Admiral Coligny, whom I fought for at Saint Quentin; and by the Prince de Condé, whom I accompanied into Orleans."

"You have seen all those illustrious generals?"

"I have both seen and spoken to them. Ah! gentlemen, you are brave, I doubt not, but let me tell you that the race of the strong and valiant has almost passed away."

"You are the last, I suppose?"

"Not of those; but the last of a band of ten; death has taken all the rest."

"And what were their names and adventures?"

"Their adventures would make a volume; as for their

names, there was Dominico Terrante. He went first. One evening, passing with two companions by the tower of Nesle, he offered a devil of a Florentine sculptor, called Benvenuto Cellini, to help him to carry a sack of money that he had just received from the treasurer of Francis the First. Benvenuto, misunderstanding his kindness, drew his sword and nailed poor Terrante to the wall."

"Ah! that comes from being too obliging."

"The second was Fracasso, a great poet. One night, when composing, in the environs of Saint Quentin, he fell by chance into the midst of an ambush laid for the Duke Emmanuel. Fracasso was so occupied with his rhyme, that he found himself in the midst of the *mêlée*, and a blow from the club of a fellow called Scianca-Ferro, the duke's squire, laid him on the ground. The ambush failed, and poor Fracasso was hung up to an oak tree. The third was a worthy German, called Frantz Scharfstein. He was as tall and strong as a Hercules, and he fell, fighting bravely, on the beach at Saint Quentin. God rest his soul, as well as that of his uncle, Heinrich, who died an idiot through weeping for him."

"My uncle would not do that for me," cried several voices.

"The fifth," continued the beggar, "was called Lactance. He is sure of his salvation, for, after having fought twenty years for our holy religion, he died a martyr."

"A martyr! Peste! tell us how?"

"It is very simple. He was then serving under the orders of the famous Baron des Adrets, who has, as you perhaps know, passed his whole life in changing from Catholic to Protestant, and from Protestant to Catholic. He was then a Catholic, and having taken some Huguenots prisoners, and not knowing what sort of death to in-

flict on them, Lactance had the holy idea of flaying them, and hanging the walls of the houses in the village of Mornas with their skins instead of tapestries—which was done, to the honour of our holy religion. But, the next year, the baron turned Protestant, and Lactance falling into his hands, he remembered his advice, and had him treated in the same way. The sixth was a young and handsome gallant, always running after the women."

"Not so loud, my friend, for if King Henri hears you, he will have you sent away for having kept such bad company."

"And what was his name?" said another.

"He was called Victor Yvounet. One night when he was visiting a lady, her husband unhinged a massive oak door through which he had to pass, so that when poor Yvounet put the key in, it fell on him and killed him. The seventh was called Martin Pilletrousse, who was hung by mistake, and the eighth was Jean Procope."

At this moment there was a cry of "The king!"

"Hide yourself," cried the young men; "the king does not like old or sad faces."

The king entered, looking very melancholy.

"Gentlemen," said he, to the young men, who were forming a hedge before the old adventurer, "I have this morning received the news of the death of Duke Emmanuel Philibert. He died worthily, as he had lived, and as he was a friend of mine, I shall wear mourning for a week, and shall hear mass said for him each day. I trust you will do the same."

The king then proceeded to the church, and the guard followed him. On returning, they looked for the beggar, but he had disappeared. So had a purse and a gold chain. He had but one hand, but he knew how to use it. They inquired of the sentinel if he had seen him, and he replied—

“Yes, gentlemen ; he went out, saying, ‘Tell the noble gentlemen with whom I have had the honour of conversing, that my other companions were called Procope and Maldent ; both are dead, and I am called Cæsar-Hannibal Malemort.’”

And this was all that was ever known of the last of the adventurers.

THE END



